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ABSTRACT

The two issues of this journal contain articles about aspects of English teaching and samples of student work. The Fall 1995 issue contains: "'I Want More Books Like It': Implementing a Reading Workshop in an Urban Classroom with At-Risk Students" (Rebecca Joseph); "Service Learning Prompt for the Maryland Writing Test" (Kathy A. Megyeri); "My Grandfather and the Fish" (Elizabeth Hodges); "Crystal" (Patricia Wilson); "Practice Makes Perfect" (Patricia Wilson); five samples of senior citizens' local history writing; and 24 samples of children's writing, primarily poetry. The Spring 1996 issue (Special Issue: English for Speakers of Other Languages) contains: "Understanding Limited English Proficiency Students: Strategies for Non-ESOL Teachers" (Jennifer Wilmer, Martha Rowe Dolly); "Making Sense of the American Experience: Performance-Based Group Projects and Individual Speech Presentations as Bond Builders for Speakers of English as a Second Language" (Lee Viccellio); "Making Sense of the American Experience: Literature as a Bond Builder for Speakers of English as a Second Language" (Joanne Langan); "Making Sense of the American Experience: Writing Instruction as Bond Building for Speakers of English as a Second Language" (Nancy Traubitz); "'Where Is Your ID?': The Literacy Narrative of a Bilingual, Bicultural Student at an Urban University" (Mary Louise Buley-Meissner); 22 samples of children's writing; and "Poetry: Passion of Long-Time 'Maryland English Journal' Contributor Carol F. Peck" (Erin E. Calvert). (MSE)

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- Service Learning Prompt for the Maryland Writing Test
- My Grandfather and the Fish
- Crystal
- Practice Makes Perfect
- Senior Citizens' Local History Writing
- Maryland Showcase for Young Writers

Maryland Council of Teachers of English/Language Arts
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Manuscript Format

Manuscripts submitted to ***Maryland English Journal*** must conform to the following standards:

1. Manuscripts must be typed double-spaced, including quotations and works cited. Length should not exceed 15 to 20 pages.
2. Manuscripts must include an abstract of 75 to 150 words.
3. Manuscripts must include a cover sheet containing the title, name and instructional affiliation of the author(s), date of submission, and other professional or biographical data to be noted in the journal.
4. The first page of text must include the title of the manuscript but not the name(s) and instructional affiliation(s) of the author(s). Manuscripts should be free of internal references to author identity.

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The content, organization, and style of manuscripts must follow the current MLA citation system (please use the month or season as well as the year in citing journals) and the NCTE *Guidelines for Nonsexist Use of Language*. Authors using computers should avoid special type (bold, italic, etc.) and use left justification only.

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1. Submit *four* copies of the manuscript on 8½ × 11-inch white paper with at least one-inch margins on all sides. Retain a file copy.
2. Include three unaddressed envelopes with sufficient postage for mailing to three associate editor referees; do not attach the stamps to the envelopes. Include two self-addressed stamped envelopes for communications from the editor.
3. Submit only completed manuscripts.
4. Send manuscripts to the editor, ***Maryland English Journal***, at the address below. The ***Journal*** welcomes submissions at any time. However, to facilitate our review and publication timelines, submissions are particularly invited by **March 10** and **September 10**.

Review Process

Associate editors review blind submissions, a process that can take up to three months. Accepted manuscripts may need to be edited for clarity, organization, language, or style. Published authors will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their submission appears.

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From the Editor's Desk

Much of this issue is by Marylanders or about Maryland. The first piece overviews the implementation of a high-interest reading workshop program in a Baltimore City classroom with at-risk high school students. Next, a ninth grade English teacher details use of a writing prompt designed by teachers at her school to help students meet two Maryland graduation requirements—passing the state writing test and completing service learning.

Then comes a section of original literature. A fiction piece, fifteen years in the making, reminisces about childhood summers spent fishing on the Severn River with a grandfather who is now dying. A short story and poem set in the mountains of Western Maryland explore the origins of snow and the rewards of practicing a figure eight on ice.

In the tradition of *Foxfire*, in which memories of senior community members were captured in their own words, and as a counterpoint to our regular Maryland Showcase for Young Writers section, this issue of *MEJ* features winning essays in the Allegany County Eighth Annual Senior Citizens' Local History Writing Contest. Allegany County is the only Maryland county to hold such a contest and the annual nature of the event fosters an on-going writers' support network among the group members, many of whom enter each year.

Each of us involved with *MEJ*'s production hope you enjoy this issue. I continue to invite your input and submissions as readers of the *Journal*, and I thank you for your support of this process.

From Deep Within

Poetry Workshops in Nursing Homes

By Carol F. Peck

Author Carol Peck draws on her many years' experience leading poetry workshops at all levels as one of Maryland's Poets-in-the-Schools as well as Writer-in-Residence at Sidwell Friends School, Lecturer in English at University of Maryland University College, and a volunteer at Bethesda Retirement and Nursing Center.

"Although *From Deep Within* is specifically addressed to those teaching poetry [writing] to nursing home residents. . . the actual guidlines are simple and easy to follow. Additionally, there are poems to guide and direct the learner. Any poet, potential poet, or person who just enjoys reading poetry can enjoy this book."
—Marsha Cox, Texas Christian University

"Artfully weaving the Nursing Center residents' poems with those of young school children, she demonstrates how lively and varied are the responses to her creative writing projects."
—Judith Bowles, MFA, Iona House

". . . a treasure trove of ideas that will motivate even the novice to say, 'I can do that, too.' This book is also simply a pleasure to read, to become surprised and absorbed by the beauty of the thoughts expressed by these elder poets."
—Beckie Karras, Registered Music Therapist-Board Certified, Activities Consultant, Certified

(Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 1989)

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"I WANT MORE BOOKS LIKE IT": IMPLEMENTING A READING WORKSHOP IN AN URBAN CLASSROOM WITH AT-RISK STUDENTS

Rebecca Joseph
Southeast Middle School, Baltimore City

Placed for seven weeks of student teaching in an urban high school English classroom whose at-risk students typically spent most of their time completing grammar exercises, the author sought to find a way to interest the students in authentic reading activities. The author implemented reading workshops and literature studies. Despite continued attendance problems and low numbers of high-interest, easy-reading books, the program had several strengths, including a flexible format and the opportunity to match the students with provocative, interesting books at their individual reading levels.

After teaching for two years as a full-time middle school language arts teacher, I took a year-long study leave to participate in Towson State University's Master of Arts in Teaching program, a 12-month program that involved two student teaching experiences in the local public schools. Nothing during my two years of teaching or my graduate coursework prepared me for my second student teaching placement that occurred at one of the most challenging high schools in the area. Two of the five classes I student taught were for ninth grade repeaters—students who had failed ninth grade English at least once, often twice. The students attended school erratically and when they did come to class typically did grammar book work and tried to read literature that was above their reading levels. I had always believed that, if students could read literature that interested them, their reading and writing skills would develop at a faster rate. I wanted to see if this format could work with this population of high risk students. As a result, during my seven-week student teaching placement, I implemented reading workshops so that the students could read interesting books at their actual reading levels. [Note: All names of students in this article have been changed to protect their privacy. Responses from students have not been corrected for grammar or usage.]

THE STUDENTS

Until the year I interned there, all ninth graders at this integrated urban high school were taught together. But since almost 50 percent of these students fail at least once and only 30 percent

Rebecca Joseph is a sixth grade language arts teacher at Southeast Middle School in Baltimore City. She is enrolled in Towson State University's Master of Arts in Teaching program.

eventually make it to graduation, administrators decided to isolate first-time ninth graders in an effort to increase their likelihood of graduating from high school. This change left all of the ninth grade repeaters to be taught in separate classes. My cooperating teacher taught two such classes a day. While she had over 40 students on one class roll and over 30 on the other roll, actual class size ranged each day from one to twelve. A core of four to six students came regularly to each class; unfortunately, those core students rarely all came on the same day, and some very disruptive students would drop in once every two to three weeks for a day or two and then disappear. These ninth grade readers had third grade to college level reading skills.

The Setting

The setting of the classroom was almost as bleak as the attendance and variety of reading levels. When I arrived for my student teaching assignment, the large, sunny classroom had 45 desks pushed together in five rows of nine desks. During these two small classes, the one to twelve students would spread themselves throughout the rows of desks.

Before I started student teaching, the only books in the classroom were two sets of grammar texts, two sets of anthologies, and two sets of novels hidden in a file cabinet drawer—*Call of the Wild* and *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

The Program

The ninth-grade repeaters typically spent their days doing grammar drills off the chalkboard and then grammar exercises from the grammar texts or from dittos. Reading was rarely the focus in class. During the fall term, the students spent a brief period of time reading *Call of the Wild* by Jack London. My cooperating teacher read the text aloud because it was far above most of the students' independent reading levels. She stopped teaching the novel less than halfway through because of the students' erratic attendance and frustration with the difficulty of the story.

The more I thought about what I wanted to do with these ninth grade students during my placement, the more I wanted to encourage them to read books that interested them and that were at their own reading level. The reading workshop format described by Nancie Atwell's *In the Middle* quickly came to mind. The reading workshop format seemed ideal for this population because no matter when a student came to class, he or she could pick up a book and read and never be behind. I designed much of my project on

the workshop format Atwell used with her students: a brief mini-lesson followed by independent or small group reading. Following the Atwell model, each student was required to write me, or a peer, a weekly letter about the book he or she was reading.

Once I started the project, the first thing I did was to rearrange the classroom. Needing only 24 desks for our other three classes, I put four rows of six desks in the front of the classroom. For our two ninth grade repeater classes, I arranged a circle of 12 desks in the back of the room. The remaining desks I had cleared from the room. A much more spacious and comfortable learning environment resulted. For mini-lessons and other class discussions, we met in the circle. For independent reading, students sat anywhere they wanted in the classroom.

Next, I had each student complete the reading interest survey Nancie Atwell has her students complete at the beginning of the school year; the survey includes important questions such as: "What kinds of books do you like to read?" "Do you ever read novels at home for pleasure?" and "Who are your favorite authors?"

Of the twelve students who completed the survey, four said they never read at home. Five said that they read but "not very often," "once in a while," or "like when I have nothing to do." The other three said they read on a regular basis, ranging from one book a month to three books a week. They said they liked to read mysteries, animal books, poetry books, adventure books, and realistic books. Only six of the students listed favorite authors; they included Dr. Seuss, Judy Blume, Beverly Cleary, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, and Ann St. Martin. One student listed Tolstoy and other Russian authors; this student had been placed in this classroom because of her limited English proficiency. A recent émigré from the Ukraine, she was clearly proficient in reading Russian but was reading on a sixth-grade level in English. (A thirteenth student was present that day but did not complete the form because she had only been in the country for three months and knew a minimal amount of English.)

After the students in the two classes completed the survey, I explained that I wanted to give them an opportunity to read books of their own choice, independently or in groups. I told them that I would provide a variety of books based on what they had filled in on the survey, or they could borrow books from the school or public library. Immediately upon hearing about the group reading possibility, the students in one class (which I will call Class A because

it met in the morning—a.m.) decided they wanted to read a book together and then read books independently. I gave book talks on several novels they might like to read together, including *Hatchet*, *Shabanu*, and *Maniac Magee*. The students chose *Maniac Magee*, the 1991 Newberry Award winner. The second class (which I will call Class P because it met in the afternoon—p.m.) decided to read books independently. The two recent émigrés were in this class.

Armed with the knowledge of the books they liked to read, I went to the public library and to a local children's bookstore and borrowed or purchased books that I thought would interest these students, including several copies of *Maniac Magee*. I also sorted through my own extensive collection of young adult literature and chose some books I thought the students might like to read. When I was finished, I had two boxes full of paperback books for the classroom library.

For the next three weeks, Class A read *Maniac Magee*, discussed it, and wrote journal entries about the book and the issues it raised. Many of the students liked to add artwork to their writing, so I provided arts and crafts materials. One student chose to make a calendar of *Maniac Magee*. After completing *Maniac Magee* the class initially decided to read another book together. But after choosing *The Moves Make the Man* and reading the first four chapters together, the students decided to stop reading the book because they found it too boring. They then began to read books independently. During the three-week reading workshop that followed, I would start every other class with a mini-lesson. Topics included how to choose a book, how to find a book in the library, and various profiles of specific authors. Writers I discussed—one per day—included Walter Dean Myers, Gary Paulsen, Langston Hughes, and Nikki Giovanni. After talking about specific poets, we would read a couple of poems by the poet. The students in Class A enjoyed writing poetic responses to these poems.

Class P immediately began a reading workshop format with brief mini-lessons followed by independent reading or writing in journals. I provided colorful folders and paper for the students, several of whom rarely came to class with any supplies. The Class P students chose not to write poetry after reading the poems by Langston Hughes and Nikki Giovanni; they preferred to continue reading their own books.

The books the students in both classes read ranged from adventure thrillers by Theodore Taylor and Gary Paulsen, to horror

books by R.L. Stine, to realistic fiction like *The Contender* by Robert Lipsyte, *A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich* by Alice Childress, and *Marcia* by John Steptoe. After finishing a book in addition to their weekly literary letters, students filled out a book ballot which they placed in the book so that their classmates could read colleague reactions to the book before reading it. I modeled the ballots after those described in an article by Marianne Saccardi entitled "Children Speak: Our Students' Reactions to Books Can Tell Us What to Teach."

Toward the end of the first four weeks, several students in Class P became restless and wanted to read a book together. After reading ballots that students in Class A had filled in about *Maniac Magee*, these students decided they wanted to read it. Twice a week, students in Class P read the novel together.

Active Involvement

The reading workshop format was an excellent way to include several students who ordinarily would have fallen between the cracks because of poor attendance or low reading levels. After my first week of teaching, one student who was seven months pregnant told me she would not be returning for an indefinite amount of time because she needed to spend the last eight weeks of her pregnancy in bed. At the same time, she expressed a desire to keep up with the class. For the remaining six weeks of my student teaching placement, I sent books home to her. She read about two a week, wrote me letters, and filled out ballots for each book. After she read one book called *Marcia*, I received the following ballot comment: "I want more books like it." My cooperating teacher said this student had never expressed any interest in reading before.

For the two English as a second language students, I also needed to make special arrangements so that they could actively participate in class. Lana, who had been in the country for about two years, was reading at a college level in Russian but at about a sixth or seventh grade level in English. I let Lana alternate between reading books in Russian and in English. Olga, who had only been in the country for about three months, read at a college level in Polish and at a pre-school level in English. I let her read Polish books in class and write her letters in Polish. (Lana, who had a working knowledge of Polish, translated for her.) Once a week, my cooperating teacher would read a children's book with Olga to help her develop her English.

Few High-interest, Easy-reading Young Adult Novels

This program was clearly an effective way to engage all of the students in both classes in reading. It is unfortunate that there are few high-interest, easy reading young adult novels featuring urban students in their mid-to-late teens. The few that I found the students read immediately. In both classes, the girls' favorite book was *Marcia* by John Steptoe; the book details the problems of a fifteen-year-old Harlem girl, including the sexual pressures placed on her by her boyfriend.

Responses in the students' letters to me and their ballots were extremely favorable. Hannah wrote, "I think this book is real. The problems I'm reading about happens everyday. And right now this book can be helpful to a lot of teens today." Danielle (the pregnant girl in Class P) wrote, "It really told Marcia's life and that's what I really liked. It got directly to the point It wasn't alot of pages to read before I got to it and another thing that I liked was that it only had 69 pages in the book."

Finding books that were relatively short was critical with these students because few of them read at home and because they enjoyed the feeling of finishing a book.

Choice

The students genuinely liked reading books of their own choosing. Ed in Class P read *A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich* and could not believe that the author had the characters speaking just like people do today on the streets. Several times, he took the book over to his friends and showed them examples of the dialogue. Ed wrote, "I like this book because it reminds me of how me and my friends talk when walking down the street. I think this book is a 9 1/2."

Once again, all of the girls loved reading *Marcia*. In fact, my cooperating teacher overheard two of them telling another girl not in the class about the book in the hallway.

One of the girls she overheard, Talia in Class P, wrote the following letter:

> I like *Marcia* because it had something's going on that young people is facing today. There is only one thing I don't like in this book.... when they was saying something about Danny pressuring Marcia they really didn't go into detail. I agree with what Marcia did when she had something on her mind. The first thing that she did was her and Danny talk about it, then

she talk to her friend Millie. She really didn't get the kind of advice she wanted so she went to her mother. Reading this book made me think to go to my mother for any advice that I may need.

Teacher Familiarity with Young Adult Literature

With a strong background in young adult literature, I was constantly matching readers with books. Most of the matches worked; some, however, did not. For example, June said she liked mysteries so I brought in several of Sue Grafton's books that turned out to be much too difficult for her. Next she selected *I Know What You Did Last Summer* by Lois Duncan, which was still too difficult. I then brought in some R.L. Stine mystery/horror books that she devoured.

Interesting Discussions

The conversations that resulted from students' readings were interesting and important. After finishing *Marcia*, Hannah started a conversation about the sexual pressure teenage girls face; this started a 30-minute conversation in Class A which ranged from the sexual pressures girls face, to the sexual pressures boys face, to the different kinds of protection they used, and on and on. I concluded the class by introducing them to the book *Sweet Illusions* by Walter Dean Myers, which traces the lives of 13 young adults—male and female—who confront teenage pregnancy issues.

After reading a section in *Maniac Magee* that focused on the stereotypes some white people have about blacks, the African-American students in Class P started asking me and the other white people in the room about how we live, bathe, and more. A lively discussion ensued which I think answered some questions these students had harbored a long time about people of different races.

Beautiful Student Writing

Not only did fascinating conversations ensue from this project but also some beautiful writing. After reading Langston Hughes' poem "Harlem," which starts "What happens to a dream deferred?" students in Class A wrote their own poems about dreams fulfilled. Hannah wrote a wonderful poem and illustrated it; so did several other students including Jake. After reading Nikki Giovanni's "Nikki-Rosa," we talked about how outsiders view us, and the students in Class A wrote poems about how people misunderstand them. Clarice, a relative newcomer to Class A, wrote:

Some people might say you should have
two parents living at your home

but I say it really doesn't matter
because I am happy at home...

Some people say my clothes are
rags and I deserve better

but I say everyone is dressing that way
and you can't judge a book by its cover

Program Assessment

Since I was only there for seven weeks in the late spring of the school year, it is difficult to assess in quantitative terms the program's success. Attendance, which deteriorates rapidly at the school during the spring, did not improve as a result of the program, nor did it decrease. Students did seem eager to come to class. They carried their books wherever they went. They talked in depth about the literature, and they were able to respond to the literature in writing. Many wanted to know if they could continue the program after I left. I personally felt its success when the students began asking me individually and in groups about what other books I thought they might enjoy reading. For this group of students, I thought the program was a great success.

Future Directions

Reading workshop is an effective way to involve at-risk urban students in the English classroom because the workshop format enables them to read and write about topics that interest them. Since I plan to continue working with at-risk urban students, I am constantly searching for more high-interest, easy-reading books that will interest urban teenagers. I welcome suggestions. Below is a list of the books my students and I found interesting.

Popular, High-interest, Easy-reading Young Adult Books

Childress, Alice. *A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich.* New York: Avon Books, 1973.

Coerr, Eleanor. *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes.* New York: Dell Publishing, 1977.

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The Maryland Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (MCTELA) was founded in the late 1950s. Originally geared to English instruction, it expanded in the 1970s to include all language arts teachers. Business meetings and conferences used to take place at the same annual meeting, but the organization has grown to include monthly Executive Board meetings and semi-annual conferences. Activities include publication of the ***Maryland English Journal***, quarterly newsletters, Teacher of the Year selections, "Showcase" writing competitions for elementary students, and representation as an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The purposes of the Council are to improve the quality of instruction in English/Language Arts at all educational levels, pre-kindergarten through university; to encourage research, experimentation, and investigation in the teaching of English; to sponsor publications of interest to English/Language Arts teachers; to represent the interests of English/Language Arts before the public; and to integrate the efforts of all those who are concerned with English/Language Arts instruction.

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Service Learning Prompt for the Maryland Writing Test

Kathy A. Megyeri
Sherwood High School

Ninth grade English teachers at a Maryland high school designed a writing prompt to help students meet two state graduation requirements—passing the writing test and completing service learning.

Last year, we ninth grade English teachers at Sherwood High School in Sandy Spring, MD, again faced the difficult task of preparing students for the Maryland Writing Test. To make the process more meaningful, we designed a school-wide practice prompt that heightens awareness of two graduation requirements—passing the Maryland Writing Test and completing service learning. As most Maryland teachers know, our state was the first to mandate 75 hours of service-learning for graduation. Our practice prompt proved extremely successful because, in most cases, our freshmen addressed a service experience they had begun in middle school or a new issue they wanted to explore during their high school years.

We set aside a day early in the school year to administer a practice test to show students exactly what skills they have to work on, what strengths they already possess, and the types of service others are already engaged in. This is the format of the explanatory prompt our ninth graders address:

> Suppose the leader of the after school volunteer program at your school asked you to explain a community need that could be remedied by the work of student volunteers. Write a business letter to the leader explaining that need for student volunteers.
>
> Before you begin writing, think about ONE community need for student volunteers. Think about why it is a need, what actions can be taken to deal with the need, what effects these actions would have on the community, and how students can be encouraged to participate.
>
> Now, write a business letter to the leader of the after-school volunteer program at your school explaining a need that could be served by the work of student volunteers.

Kathy Megyeri has previously contributed to the Maryland English Journal. *She has taught in the Montgomery County School System for more than 30 years; in addition to teaching, she writes monthly columns on educational issues in* Women Today.

Before they submit their papers, students are encouraged to follow the attached revision checklist:

MARYLAND WRITING TEST WRITING REVISION CHECKLIST

1. Did you write on the assigned topic?
2. Did you write for the assigned audience?
3. Do your details support your topic?
4. Did you put your ideas in a clear order?
5. Did you use complete sentences?
6. Did you use words correctly?
7. Did you *capitalize* correctly? *Spell* correctly? *Punctuate* correctly?
8. Did you use the right form for a business letter?
9. Did you write neatly?

(*Handbook*, 25)

Fortunately, our school employs three composition assistants who grade the 487 freshmen papers to simulate the real test's evaluation; still, it is two to three weeks before papers are returned because they are so carefully marked. Few freshman do well on this, their first exposure to such writing demands. Then, the composition assistants go over the papers with students to explain how the grade was determined according to the explanatory rubric.

Figure 1. Grade Rubric for Explanatory Prompt

FORMexplanatory and business letter form needed
T=did ot write on topic as directed
AUDIENCE=leader of after-school volunteer program not addressed
E(1)=introduction needed
E(2)=why it is a community need—details necessary
E(3)=what actions can be taken to deal with the need
E(4)=what effects these actions have on the community
E(5)=conclusion or closing needed
ELABORATION=more details needed overall
ORGANIZATION=logical organization needed
PARAGRAPHING=multi-paragraphing needed
TS=topic sentences needed to introduce major area
M=mechanics or grammar problems
NSR=non-scorable response
H=handwriting causes confusion for the reader

Then the real teaching begins, and learning becomes more focused when each student rewrites his own paper for a better grade. In most cases, teachers have to review the techniques of "brainstorming" or "webbing" to generate more anecdotes, ideas, and detail

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before students begin the process of re-writing. Next, it is necessary to define common terms so students can appreciate the vocabulary that is used on the Maryland Writing Test, administered each January. For example, the following definitions are those we teach our students so they can comprehend the writing test prompts more clearly:

1 This prompt's *domain* is *explanatory*, not *narrative*, and it is the most difficult of the two to write well because the writer must *explain* ideas, reasons, processes, and points of view or give information. In our practice prompt, the student is asked to *explain* a community need that student volunteers can address, so the prompt demands some awareness of the student's surroundings.

2. The audience for this prompt is the volunteer coordinator for the school, the one person who matches agency with service-provider.

3. The format of this prompt is a business letter, the most logical form because, in most cases, the ninth graders don't know the volunteer coordinator of the school this early in the year, and this letter serves as the first contact between the two.

4. The specific details of a solution included in the response will be found in the third paragraph. Students must be able to visualize the parts of the prompt and organize their responses.
   - paragraph one—problem and its origin
   - paragraph two—why it's a problem and what would make it cease to be one
   - paragraph three—possible solutions and how students could personally affect a change by addressing the problem, directing the public's attention to it, or personally becoming involved in the solution
   - paragraph four—what the results or effects of these actions might be

5. The most suitable *method of development* would be spatial, chronological, in order of importance, or comparison and contrast.

6. *Transitions* are needed to link ideas and to connect sentences to one another. For example:
   Time order transitions: first, second, third, before, beginning, at first, during, instead, to begin with, in the first place, next, then, at the same time, when, now, at this point, while, until, soon, not long after, as soon as, meanwhile, after, at last, afterwards, finally, as, later, before long

Order of importance transitions: first, second, third, furthermore, in addition, equally important, moreover, next, also, last, finally, similarly
Developmental order transitions: first, second, third, also, another, for example, for instance, in addition, furthermore, similarly, besides

7. *Elaboration* means including details, anecdotes, and dialogue. If students have already been engaged in providing service through scouting or church activities, the link between need and solution is usually quite evident to them.
8. *Anecdotal elaboration* means to include a short, personal story that the students might incorporate, an easy task if they have had any experience as a service-provider.
9. *Dialogue* or use of *conversation* might be another means of elaboration.
10. *Completeness* means all relevant material is included. This is most difficult for the beginning writer. All too often a one-sentence reference to a community problem is his definition of "completeness."
11. *Brainstorming* or *webbing* is the first step in generating ideas. When the student hurries to complete the prompt, he usually doesn't think of the different approaches that are available to the community problem. Delaying the starting time of his actual writing to encourage him to sit, think, brainstorm, and web ideas is usually an effective technique.
12. A *topic sentence* is usually the first sentence and answers the questions of "who?", "what?", and "where?"
13. A *concluding sentence* is the last sentence that restates the main idea and refers back to the community need and its solution.
14. *Proofreading, revising*, and *editing* the rough draft are necessary before legibly writing the final copy in ink.

Then, because we believe so strongly in teaching by example, we show students actual papers that have received a "1," "2," "3," and "4" grade: "1" and "2" papers fail; "3" and "4" papers pass. A "4" paper directly addresses a specific audience; contains information that is complete, clear, and logically ordered; uses details; provides transitions; makes sentences smooth; and is generally free of grammatical errors. On the "3" and "4" papers, we ask students to circle transitions as we continue to teach lessons on identifying and using transitional words and phrases. Next, students are asked to rewrite their own papers for a "4" grade and use the following grade grid which allows them to see exactly what we look for in their rewrites.

GRADE GRID FOR MARYLAND WRITING TEST REWRITE

1. Is the letter in correct business letter form with inside address, heading, body, salutation, and signature above a typed name?
   Yes No
2. Did the student talk about a community need that volunteers could address? Was a topic sentence in evidence?
   Yes No
3. Did the student give adequate detail about the community problem or need?
   Yes No
4. Did the student talk about the actions that could be taken to deal with the need?
   Yes No
5. Did the student address specific effects the actions would have on the community need?
   Yes No
6. Did the student write an adequate closing for the letter?
   Yes No
7. Were no paragraphs less than three sentences?
   Yes No
8. Did the student use enough detail throughout the paper to warrant a passing grade or above (a "3" or "4") ?
   Yes No
9. Did the student circle at least three transitions?
   Yes No
10. Is it obvious the paper has been proofread?
    Yes No

Signature of an adult proofreader other than the teacher:

_____

Grade = _____

90-100 = A; 80-89 = B; 70-79 = C; 60-69 = D; below 60 = E

In 1994, our school's passing rate was 95.8, which is considered "satisfactory" by state evaluators. This score included papers written by special needs, ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), and recent transfer students who were not adequately prepared for the test. "It only takes about three or four failures to drop our scores one point," says Department Chairman James Kennedy, "but we don't exempt any students because we want to give them the experience."

What is particularly eye-opening for students is to show them examples of the kinds of papers others have written for a "1," "2,"

"3," or "4" grade. Although all four of the following are actual papers addressing the topic of litter in the parks and playgrounds near the school, we have changed the names and addresses to protect the writers' identities. It should be apparent that the proper form, adequate detail, and sufficient transitions can transform a "1" paper to the highest grade possible, a "4."

Explanatory Prompt Sample-Grade 1

100 Main St.
Olney, MD 20833
November 23, 19XX

Volunteer Leader
Sherwood High School
300 Olney-Sandy Spring Rd.
Sandy Spring, MD 20831

Dear Mrs. Meyer:

I am writing to you because we need student volunteers to clean up the parks. They are full of litter and dangerous for kids. Students could help a lot with this problem. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
(signed)
Mary Smith

P.S. Call me at 555-6832 with you answer. Thanks!

(Note: This paper is totally unacceptable in spite of the attempt at business letter format.)

Explanatory Prompt Sample—Grade 2

Mr. Martin
2413 Candybar Rd.
Rockville, MD 20855

Dear Mr. Martin,

I am writing to you to explain why there is a need for student community volunteers to clean up playgrounds in our community for when little children want to play at the playgrounds, they will be safer.

The reasons why we need community volunteers to help our keep our playgrounds clean for our youth, because children need safe places to play, not a place where they will find beer bottles, cigarette butts, needles, broken glass, and other harmful objects that make a playground unsafe.

The actions that can be taken to deal with the need is to get parents and teenage kids involved. I think an after school meeting with parents and kids would be a start for getting the kids and parents involved in this community activity. The meeting will explain how we will get this activity to work. The effects it will have on everyone, and why were doing this.

The effects that these actions will have on the community is that children won't hurt themselves everytime they go to the playground. They will have a safe environment around them when their at the playground. Parents will worry less when their child is at the playground paying.

Thank you.
(signed)
Mary Jones

(Note: Although not totally correct, this is in letter form and it does have organization, but the topic sentences do not contain specifics and the paragraphs need elaboration. The needs paragraph is not developed, and, of course, a concluding paragraph is missing. The mechanical errors indicate a lack of proofreading skill.)

Explanatory Prompt Sample—Grade 3

Michael Forest
223456 Millson Road
Olney, MD 20832

Southlake High School
17652 Southlake Road
Greenbelt, MD 23943

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you because I heard that you needed an idea for a community need. I feel that we should have the students go around the community picking up trash. In this letter I am going to let you know why it is a need. Second, what actions can be taken to deal with the need. Finally, what effects these actions would have on the community.

We should have students pick up trash around the community so that the community can look like a nice place. First, there is a lot of trash near roads that people throw out of their cars. Second, it is a way to help the community. Finally, we can show other people that the community is not a waste area.

We can get student volunteers to help make the community a better place to live. First, students can pick up the trash after school or on the weekend. Also, students can encourage other

students to help. Finally, we can put posters or fliers all over the school.

There might be a few effects these actions might have on the community. First, other students might not want to litter and leave the community a waste area. Second, the Save the Environment Club would have an activity to supply trashbags and make posters. Finally, people will keep throwing trash on the ground so the activity has to continue all year, but trash will pile up during summertime.

In conclusion, I feel that this is a very good idea if we can get the students to help. I told you why it is a need, what actions can be taken to deal with the need, and what effects these actions would have on the community.

Sincerely,
(signed)
Michael Forest

(Note: Although not totally correct, this is in business letter form and it does have good transitions, but it needs more elaboration and the topic sentences need to be more general to address the divisions. In general, ninth graders have a great deal of difficulty avoiding fragments, but this error in mechanics did not substantially detract from his paper.)

Explanatory Prompt Sample—Grade 4

18765 Darby Dr.
Olney, Md 20832
November 23, 19XX

Mr. Montgomery
Sherwood High School
300 Olney-Sandy Spring Rd.
Sandy Spring, MD 20860

Dear Mr. Montgomery:

There is a need in this community for student volunteers. Recently, you asked me to explain a need that could be met by student volunteers in an after school program. I have found such a need and am prepared to explain this need fully. The need is that this community needs volunteers to clean up the litter in the parks and playgrounds.

First of all, this is a need because there is litter everywhere. With litter in the parks, children can't play in a safe and healthy environment. Also, there is no recycling program to reduce litter. The litter that is going on the playgrounds can instead be put into

a recycling box. A recycling program is a good idea to reduce litter because there isn't really anywhere else to put the litter. The final reason why this is important is because people keep on littering even when they are told not to.

Though the above statements may seem like a big job, I have some solutions and ideas about how to do it. The first step is to inform the community about the need. Surprisingly, many people do not know or see there is a litter problem and that they need to clean up instead of littering. We will raise their awareness with articles in the school newspaper and photographs of litter will be posted in the halls. Second, a recycling program should be started. Student volunteers can set up stations with separate bins for glass, paper, and aluminum cans throughout the parks. Local businesses could donate bins with perhaps their business names on them. The third and biggest step will be to organize clean-up crews. Groups of 5 to 6 volunteers can each take one park and clean it once a week. The groups can be rotated around so that each group will have a chance to work in each park. At the end of each clean-up session, perhaps the local Dominos Pizza can treat the clean-up crews and maybe the local newspaper will take their photos.

When the above steps have been put into action, the community will naturally have been affected. One example is that the citizens will have more pride in how their community looks if they are directly involved in the clean-up. Also, people will get to know each other better by being united under a common cause. Finally, with the recycling program, the community will save energy and money.

So, in conclusion, a need that can be met by student volunteers is the need for park and playground clean-up. Volunteers will work together and get to know each other, and the recycling program will save valuable energy.

Sincerely,
(signed)
Melissa Howard

(Note: Notice the student's organization, use of transitions, detail, and logical order. Clearly, the student put some thought and care into this paper.)

Student responses encompass every conceivable service and therefore make for interesting reading. From scanning these papers, the volunteer coordinator at each school gains some ideas for service learning projects and learns about students' present con-

cerns. We found that students recommended plans for monitoring streams, creating nature trails, becoming companions to residents of nursing homes, advocating for topical issues such as gun control and crime prevention, presenting skits on drugs to their peers, running conflict resolution and peer mediation programs, restoring neglected cemeteries, running errands for the elderly, working in area soup kitchens, supervising latch-key children, and much, much more. If over 89,000 of Maryland's ninth graders address this service-learning prompt each year, then local, state and national service learning projects can be analyzed and discussed within the context of letter writing, one step in the advocacy process. Our greatest surprise was discovering the extent of service learning that students are already engaged in and how much they want to talk about it. For example, a number of students told about their current involvement, what they had learned, and how much they recommend their activities to others. Tutoring to eliminate illiteracy, eliminating poverty, and fighting crime are local community problems these three sample student papers addressed:

> After volunteering at the Toy Closet, I learned several things. I learned about sharing and giving to helpless and less fortunate kids, and I learned that community service is a good thing, and I had fun doing it. I also learned a sobering lesson. Each year, the number of children in need increases. This year, it was over 1,800 children in the area we served. To me, that is a staggering amount of children right here in our own community.

> I didn't think that illiteracy was a big problem. Seeing a nine-year-old girl that could barely read in a third grade classroom really shocked me. Nobody knew she had a problem. There wasn't even anything in her record that showed that she had a reading problem. I think it is time to realize that we have an illiteracy problem and that it won't go away if we ignore it. Student tutoring is a big need, and I know we have students already at elementary and middle school tutoring in math and reading. But the need is so great that I think we should expand the program and get transportation to help the high school students who don't drive.

> We need a program where student volunteers can observe the neighborhood for criminal and mischievous activities. During the summer, especially, many neighborhoods have more trouble with this kind of activity. With so many students out of school during the summer, the problem is worse. Last sum-

mer, there were two robberies, seven stolen mailboxes, one stolen car, and many yards trashed with toilet paper and spray paint. I think we could use volunteers in shifts to make the neighborhoods safer, and it would help teach responsibility. It doesn't have to be an everynight patrol, but a random patrol, especially on weekends. It would reduce violence and vandalism. I would call it the community summer night watch program.

Because of our success in focusing students' discussion on types of services students are either engaged in or want to address during their high school careers, we recommend that other ninth grade writing teachers who are trying to ready their students for the MWT consider using the service learning prompt. They will be pleased that such an assignment can heighten awareness of service learning and at the same time encourage students to achieve writing proficiency.

Work Cited

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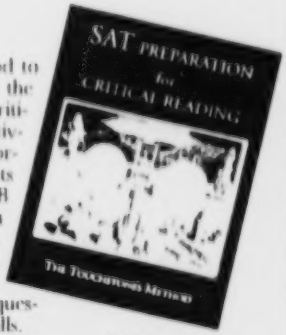

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My Grandfather and the Fish

Elizabeth Hodges
Virginia Commonwealth University

> *'The pike is a fierce and voracious fish, even devouring small waterfowl and mammals, and it puts up a strong fight when hooked'* James Beard, James Beard's Fish Cookery *(1954).*

Dawn, August 1963

It's dog days on the Severn River. The water is bathtub warm and brown from an August of no rain and endless heat. The tides rise and fall in slow motion as if they rise and fall in vats of molasses. There are dead fish on the shore. The stinging nettles are big, and they come in white and pink, yellow, rose, and purple. We kids are sure that the different colors actually sting with different severity. Adults do not agree, but we kids are right. When the nettles arrive, we usually just smear on vaseline and mineral oil and let their coating try and protect us. But this summer is extra bad. No one—not even the dogs—will go in the water, and that is serious surrender.

For several years, I have been going out with my grandfather in his boat most mornings when he goes fishing. He can't eat fish anymore, but the fire to catch them schedules his retirement. I am his tender. He had a problem with sunstroke (brought on by Old Crow bourbon) when I was seven, and since then I have gone out with him most days in case the sun got to him again and he couldn't get himself home.

Every morning I leave my house with a bacon and egg sandwich in my hand and walk over the field to the road to the beach hill and down to the pier. My grandfather always leaves about the same time and drives down. He's always there waiting in his skiff when I arrive, and he always tells me I am late. I climb off the pier into the skiff. As my grandfather primes the engine, thumb thunking the black button on the greasy red gas tank, I inhale slowly the perfume of the gasoline that radiates out from the five horse outboard in concentric rainbow circles on the brown glass surface of the motionless morning river. Then I watch the gasoline rainbow

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shatter into ripples of hues when he pulls the cord and the engine sputters to life. We back away from the pilings with a comforting growl and putt around the end of the pier to an area just down river, where boats too large and deep for the pier moor at floating buoys, small empty barrels like beer kegs, or red and orange spheres the size of beach balls, chained to cement anchors. We tie the skiff to his buoy, pull up to his big boat with its many horsepower motors, and clamber aboard. For me it is always a scramble. Every day I bark the same part of my left shin bone climbing the three feet up from the edge of the skiff into his fishing boat.

We fish all over, up river for yellow perch, down toward the bay for white perch, blues, croakers, spot. Nine miles down, where the Severn meets the Chesapeake, we troll out into the bay over oyster beds for rockfish, often pulling up toad fish which Granddaddy pierces through the brain with his hunting knife and flings off the stern, slicing their bodies out over the water in an arc of red spray. One day we skim across the river and down towards Annapolis in silence, nibbling on the forbidden danishes he always manages to have on board, him sipping from a thermos of coffee that steams with the scent of bourbon. We come abreast of a point just after the next to last bridge and turn right into a cove you wouldn't know is there if you didn't know the river well. He calls to me over the engine to be ready to drop the anchor, and I am. When he says "Now," I drop it and read its rope with my palms as it skips along the bottom until it snags. Then we bait, cast, and sit to fish.

As usual, I have one rod and reel. He has three. I sit with mine in my hands, daydreaming as I stare off down its length. He sits watching his as they stretch from their rod holders on the deck of his boat. It is a perfect spot, over weeds just off a sandbar. The fish nibble. The lapping and swelling lull. The gentle water slaps the wood of the boat playfully where water and hull meet. Out on the river beyond the cove, engines of other boats hum steadily, close then away, remote and calming like the drone of cicadas. Near the far shore, a blue heron fishes along with us. A true angler, so still and silent. We watch for golf balls from the course above the point to zing out into the water. "Waste of money," my grandfather says. "Gone forever."

"Not necessarily," I think, knowing of a Nancy Drew mystery in which Nancy finds the golf ball clue in several feet of water. Sometimes, too, I kayak over here on my own and search the shore and shallows for balls for my father.

We are fishing for perch, white or yellow. For a while we catch them just right, not too fast, not too slow. The stringer holding the fish we catch looks healthier and healthier. It will soon be time to go. But my line starts out again and the pole begins to bend. I feel sharp hard tugs and uneven pauses. Hard. Almost too hard. I get excited. Granddaddy grabs the pole from me and pulls it back in a huge long-armed arc. Graceful. Whatever has the hook resists, then pauses. "It's an eel, Bets." He hands the pole back. "Don't bring an eel into the boat."

Eels. In this river they get as much as six maybe seven feet long and two and a half even three inches in diameter. They are like snakes only slimy. My dad and uncles like to eat them. Me, they just fascinate and scare. I have a hard time resisting the urge to catch them, maybe to get them on *my* turf.

If this *is* an eel, which I know for sure it isn't, it is the biggest. I keep reeling and feeling, and my grandfather keeps warning me about the consequences of bringing it into the boat. You can never completely wash an eel away. On a pier or in a boat, they leave a sticky coating of green mucous vegetable scunge all over. You always know where an eel has been. And if you get a finger in its mouth, it is like your finger is caught in a pair of heavy relentless pliers. But I know this isn't an eel. My grandfather just won't listen. And I have to make sure, just a look.

Back and forth we go—
"It's not an eel."
"It's an *eel*, Bets."
"It's not an eel."
"It's an eel, Bets."
—till I see a shadowy shape rising sharply yet eerily from the murk and it is beginning to fight harder and harder. I call out, "It's a barracuda, Granddaddy." But my grandfather sits and ignores me. Doesn't budge. Doesn't look. Angry. He opens his newspaper between us like a curtain.

"I need the net. I can't hardly hold this." He ignores me still. So I wrench the fish somehow up and into the boat. It is a pike. Easily eight pounds. Maybe more. It throws those pounds around with a frenzy sure to land it out of the boat again. But my grandfather snaps to action, grabs the fish, and yells "Line! Line!" I reel in some, not realizing he wants more line instead of less. He yells. My hook has pierced his thumb, past the barb. He wrenches it out and then, then he begins a steady and economical purging of the boat.

My rod goes first. He breaks the pole in four pieces and throws the handful of shiny shellacked brown sticks over the side in a bunch, punching the water. Then the cushions. Orange. Blue. Green. One by one in quick succession they fly low over the water, spinning clockwise, till they slap into a skid on the surface and skip like stones a little further from where they landed. As the first one flies, the heron, with its prehistoric squawk, jolts up into the air, and heads for the furthest point in the cove. I hunch low in the back left corner of the stern, my fingers under the edges of the fiberglass deck at the sides where there is a gap left for rain and spray to escape to the bilge. The pike throws itself around the deck, the sides of the boat too high for it to get back to the water. The oars follow, awkwardly rotating end over blade once or twice till, gawky, their paddle ends trip on the water and the oars angle down into the water, bobbing as they sink. I know I could make it to shore. No problem. But we are on the other side of the river at least six miles downriver from the pier. I would have to find a phone and explain to too many people why I was stranded.

A spare gas tank. The perch we caught. His deck chair. The danish. His newspaper. I huddled in the corner until the only things left in the boat were me, the pike still flapping around the boat, my grandfather's rods and reels, and his thermos. And him. With a silver slash of steel blade, his hunting knife severs the rope that holds us to the anchor and he starts the boat. His lines still out, their poles bend like willow limbs in a strong wind as he tears too fast out of the cove and revs the engine full, throwing the boat over waves and wakes back up the river to his mooring and home. I huddle, the day gone wild and frightening, bleak and unsure.

We surge straight and fast across the river, no mind paid to smaller boats, till we get to his buoy. He ties up, takes the pike into the skiff with him and putts back to the pier. He gets smaller as he goes and fades from color to silhouette. As he marches up the pier to his car, the pike swings from a stringer, still flapping and fighting. I watch his car disappear up the steep beach road going home. He never said a word. Nor did I. I have made myself as small as possible, crouching against the boat's ribs in the back left corner. Alone now, I listen as silence grows loud. No people are in the water or on the beach. No geese or swans honk and hiss in the shallows. Only occasional crows break the silence, their grating metal cawing calling out the presence of dead fish washing ashore.

My mother told me much later, when I finally got up the nerve to question this series of events, that she knew something was wrong when my grandfather drove in fast and slammed the car door so hard that it might have broken the window. He had broken car windows before. She was afraid to go next door and ask what was wrong, what I had done, where I was. After a while, when I didn't follow him home, she drove down to the beach, walked out the pier, looked out at the boat. I saw her car coming down the beach hill and ducked down, peering carefully through gaps in the bundle of tarp my grandfather had neglected to snap over the boat. She got out and walked out the pier to the skiff's slip. Finally, she walked back to the car, climbed in, drove away. I stayed in the boat as the sun moved from right above towards the west, letting my body bake on the gritty fiberglass deck, letting the sun sear my skin rather than seeking shade in the prow. Occasionally I rose to peek over the edge of the boat at the shore up the hill towards home. Waiting for I don't know what. Perhaps for my sense that my chest and belly were collapsing, that I was caving into myself, to ebb. Perhaps just hanging on to the last peace I thought I'd ever know. The sun burned down and the boat rocked, drifting far enough every once in a while to pull hard at its chain and then give in to its mooring a hundred and fifty yards off shore. And finally, I lowered my body down into the tepid dog days' river without the armor of mineral oil and vaseline to protect me from stinging nettles, and I began a long crawl shoreward, the tentacles of nettles caressing my exposed flesh in burns, the ropy lengths of tall seaweed reaching almost to the surface and winding its strong lengths around my legs and arms, pulling and dragging at me till I could only swim like a retriever, legs and arms spinning up close to the body, my chin pointed up and towards the beach. By the time I got to the shore, welts like red varicose veins were rising wherever the nettles' tentacles had caressed me.

2:11AM — SEPTEMBER 17, 1973

My grandfather sleeps on his back *au naturale*. I pass the open door of the room he sleeps in, my parents' room, on my way to bed. In the light from the bathroom, left on so he doesn't wake up in confusion, I can see quite clearly that his balls are shrivelled like prunes, gnarled like the shells of black walnuts. But pale like anemic chicken livers. Maybe mauve. The door is open so I can hear him if he calls. Night after night for almost two weeks now, I've helped him sit up and then shouldered him down from my parents' tall post bed where he is sleeping. Guide and crutch, I

half carry him to the toilet so he can urinate. I have gotten to know the contours of his big-boned old body, with its flaccid and pale flesh; long white whiskers sprouting from his chest like the wires of broken springs spiral through a chair seat. He is six-four, but weak. He feels fragile—I worry as I guide and support that my fingers' pressure on his ribs might rub his crepe paper skin away and he might bleed.

In the middle of the night, I go to him when he cries out "Sis!" and wakes me. It interests me that he calls me this. Sis is the name he's always called Mom, which confused me when I was a kid. Mom was his *daughter*, not his sister. For no reason I can really recall, I eventually knew that for him his women were sort of generic. He called my sisters and my cousins Sis. He called mom Sis and my grandmother, his wife, Mom. I was fourteen before I realized that Grandmother and I shared the same first name. Elizabeth.

But now, at night, he calls out Sis and *I* go, to balance his near two hundred pounds of bone and flesh, stagger-stepping him from the bed through the dark bedroom to the brightly lit bathroom. I hold him up in front of the toilet, my arm around his waist as if in a hug, while he drapes his long skinny penis in the long warped fingers of his right hand and lets go a yellow stream in stops and starts, a trickle, a rush, a trickle.

It would be easier for us both, but he just will not sit down to pee. He is not shamed that I stand there, twenty, full-breasted and firm, supple and strong, lush, holding him while I brace myself against the cold tile wall so we won't fall. He says, "Girls sit." I wonder if he knows which Sis I am. I watch and wonder if he's unembarrassed because I'm just family. I wonder how long his testicles have looked like dried prunes.

During the day, he seems to know I'm a granddaughter, though he still calls me Sis. I keep him entertained, bake apple pies and let him eat them warm with butter and slabs of sharp yellow cheddar. Today, when I pressed the knife through the cheese, I remembered one night when I ate alone with my grandparents at their house. Though they lived right nearby, I hardly ever ate any meals at their table on my own. But this night, I think Mom was still in Annapolis in the hospital after having Kath. Dad was visiting. I guess I was seven, then.

Grandmother brought an apple pie to the table hot, sweet-scented steam rising steadily through the brown-edged A for Apple.

As she went back to the kitchen to get the butter she always slipped in between the upper crust and the hot fruit before she passed each slice, Granddaddy winked at me and whispered, "Watch this, Bets." Then he called out, "Bring some cheese, Mom?"

Grandmother came back, anger stretching her eyes to slits, her lips to lines, and with butter plate in hand, snapped that if he wanted to spoil her good pie with rat cheese to damn well get it himself. And he did. And then he began to eat his hot pie with thick slices of cheese, sassy lip-sucking and mm-mms with each full mouth. Grandmother steamed in silence. Granddaddy offered me a slice of cheese, and I almost took it, like a fish to bait. But it was, and nowadays I think he meant it like this, too much of a test for *my* guts, and of my allegiance. I wanted, suddenly, to just leave, so my slice hardly touched, I said I was too full to eat *any*thing and could I be excused. And excused I went, out into the warm late March evening, across the wide yard, and back to the safe upstairs of my home. Lifting the window facing down on their house, I heard Grandmother's voice rise up and his roar above it through their opened back door.

2:17AM — SEPTEMBER 18

I am keeping him entertained by playing the guitar and singing. "Waltzing Mathilda, waltzing Mathilda, will you come a waltzing Mathilda with me?" I sing that song at least fifteen times a day. It seems to be his favorite. He always has liked what Grandmother used to call "those bawdy songs"—those raucous, hip-slapping, stomping songs. He never liked sweet or bittersweet or just plain sad or bitter songs, and he had no use at all for classical music. Mostly, the songs he likes have some sex to them, but when I was a kid and he came into the house while I was practicing the piano, the best I could do was to stop wrestling with Clemente or Schubert and play something he liked. The "Little Brown Jug" or "Blue Tail Fly." Some polka. He liked the beat. Now I know a few truly bawdy songs I can sing to him, and a few I shouldn't, but today I sang those too. "Don't you feel my, don't you feel my thigh" . . . "Woman be wise, keep your mouth shut" . . . "Let me be your blender, Babe. I can whip, chop, and puree." They keep him happy. He slaps his thigh and laughs and calls me Sis. It helps me pass these days waiting for someone to come home so I can go back to school.

2:13AM — SEPTEMBER 19

He was only here about thirty-two hours when he got to Mom so badly that she finally just threw some things in her car and

drove off. I don't blame her. I should be worried, but right now I can't say I care. Dad is gone on business. I have always been one of those people who can smooth things out between people, but with Granddaddy here, I have met my match. I sent Kath off to stay with her friend, Lisa. She has such a temper. She tolerates no seeming sin against her thirteen-year-old self. My grandfather has always been quick to zero in on sore spots, like a yellowjacket to a rotten spot on a windfall pear, and my sister has got a bunch of sore spots these days.

So it's just him and me, this grandfather and me. If I have to be the one to take care of him with no adults around to help, because right now, even almost at 21, I don't feel much like an adult in some ways, well, I certainly don't need my little sister acting out. I need to keep cool and tend the immediate.

Today I added to my repertoire. "Alberta let your hair hang low. Alberta let your hair hang low. I'll give you more gold, than your pockets will hold, Alberta let your hair hang low" and I baked another pie and sliced up the cheddar. No problem. It's sort of getting routine now.

10:32PM — SEPTEMBER 20

The smell of him is beginning to get to me. I can help him to the toilet at night so he makes it on time, but I am not sure how to get him clean of daily sweat and arm pits. I have suggested a bath, but he doesn't want one. He says, "What have I done to get dirty, Sis?" It's not that he's modest. He just does not want to get wet and chilled, and I can understand that, but still. There's a stand-up shower I might shove him into, but if his knees give way like they do at times, he'll fold up like some collapsible chair, and I'll have a hell of a time getting him out of that narrow space without hurting us both.

3:41AM — SEPTEMBER 21

After eight days, I have cracked. I put a step stool in the bathroom last night and when he called Sis and he finished his pee, I as gently as possible forced him to sit on the stool while I ran soapy hot water in the sink and sponged him down. He whined. Scary. "Aw Sis, don't. It's cold. I'm cold. It's cold. I'm cold." He was keening. I never knew what that sound really was till tonight. His voice rising like a high pitched siren, like the ones that keened over London when the Nazi bombers were zeroing in. "You're killin' me Sis. You're killin' me. Freezin' me, Sis. Aw, Sis. Aw, Sis."

He scared me. He hit a high pitch and held it, long and clear, like the eerie howl of a beagle trailing a scent through a cornfield in a raw and gray November dusk when the uncut stalks stand tall and dry and rustle, making sounds like scratches on an old 78. Like the beagle whines on and on, up one row, down the next, Granddaddy kept up his echoing whine. A bath had seemed like a good idea. It was just water, but he keened on and on with a terrible rhythm till he started flailing, whipping the air with his arms like he was a windmill, swatting at me like I was a gnat. I worked fast. I told him, "It's warm water," trying to keep my voice sweet and get the soap off him. When his bony forearm connected hard with my nose and drew blood, I gave in.

I can't sleep. I keep hearing him telling me I'm killing him.

5:19AM — 9EPTEMBER 22

Around 4 he tried to make the toilet on his own and fell. He is so big, and one leg got bent under him. He is so heavy. He wet himself and made a mess of my mother's white rug. He's got a lump on his forehead and a bad bruise coming up on his shoulder. I think he hit the bed when he fell. I have been scared in my life, but this was different. I thought he was dead, and it would have been my fault. I have promised him no more baths and have been putting arnica and witch hazel on the bruises. I can hear him breathing evenly now. I feel so hollowed out.

12:15PM — 9EPTEMBER 22

So far, he's staying in bed today. Nice, though I feel guilty. But I need a break from needing to do showtime all the time. Time to think. The longer this goes on the more I remember. I am a little unnerved by how much there is to remember, how much I've forgotten.

I remember that when I was a kid, Granddaddy shot any cats that he saw come into the yard around his house. It didn't matter that they were the cats from the Schroederer farm down the road and that he knew it. He shot them anyway. Now Thomas P. Whiskers, big and black, our near feral tom, sleeps away his days on the foot of my parents' bed. Granddaddy seems tickled to have the company.

Grandmom didn't seem to care about the cats, but she was very protective of squirrels. She tamed them. Bunbuns. I still call them bunbuns, even though I try not to. She'd sit on the back steps humming out, "Here bunbun, come an' get a peanut. Here

bunbun here bunbun. Come an' get a pea-nut." And those squirrels came. They took the nuts right out of her fingers without ever biting or scratching. Some would climb up her pants leg to get a nut. One old fat one with only half a tail would sit on her shoulder to get nuts. One day, my grandfather was outside by the steps. He had shorts on, no shirt, and I don't know why he was dumb enough to stand like he was, hips cocked, one leg slightly thrust forward, as he said something to my grandmother through the screen door. He stood there the way Grandmom stood when she called squirrels, and they really didn't need calling anymore. The fat one just came out of nowhere and scaled my grandfather's bare leg and chest right to his shoulder. I stood at the upstairs window facing their house and watched.

11:22PM — SEPTEMBER 22

Granddaddy has always been a tester and a judge, one of those people who has a place for everyone and always makes sure they know exactly where it is. I've learned that there are many people like that and that I am perversely drawn to them. Early conditioning, I suppose. I would have done anything to pass one of his tests with the very best grade. He used to lean towards me and smile and say, "Hey Bets. How are ya?" and he'd squeeze my knee or elbow joint till I thought he'd press his fingers through and pinch my lower arm or leg right off. I'd smile into his brown eyes and say, "I'm fine. Just fine." But I wasn't, and tears always oozed just enough from the corners of my eyes to give me away.

But to be fair, it wasn't just us kids he tested. Once he squeezed my father's right hand so hard in a handshake that my father brought his left fist up into Granddaddy's sternum and evicted the wind out of him. His eyes hardened to marbles, but his smile stayed in place.

4:44AM — SEPTEMBER 23

I can't sleep. When I try I get trapped somewhere between sleep and waking. In the doze-zone. Paralysis. The house is so quiet. I am just sitting here in my bed listening for something. Keeping some vigil. And remembering. They say your life passes before your eyes as you drown. For days now I have found myself drowning in memories, wading through the now, then suddenly caught in a rip tide of the forgotten. Brains are in part attics with many trunks, often musty, a different key for each lock. And the trunk lids fly up and open without warning. Today, as I sat by his bed and played and talked, he started talking about the river, the

fishing that was so much a rhythm of my life. He lay there recalling trips with my cousin Bill and Uncle Claud, with Mr. Peterson and Mr. McCroiry. He said, "You were good at catchin' those minnows, Sis, and you were good at catchin' those eels."

"I was pretty good at other things too," I responded. "I caught my share of fish."

"Yeah," he snorted, "fishin' up golf balls over near Sherwood Forest." In my head, a trunk flung itself open with the squawk of a startled blue heron and the jolt of a boat moving too fast and direct across the wakes of other boats. I remembered that fish, that pike I caught, a decade ago consumed by Mr. McCroiry and his wife to whom Granddaddy gave it with a tall tale of bringing it into the boat, with no net and the wrong weight line. I felt the sun, the stillness of the moored boat, the grit of the deck, the fear of that day gone wild. In the field beyond my parents' bedroom window, the crows called back those crows on the shore ten years before, and I felt again my own body caving into itself.

"Those were good days on that Severn River," he said, that frail old man, lying comfortable in my parents' bed, with a cat he would have shot ten years ago curled up at his feet. I sat very still for a long while and watched them doze.

How is it, I wonder, that we can forget our lives?

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CRYSTAL

Patricia Wilson
Frostburg State University

It was December, I remember. We lived in the mountains of Western Maryland, and we often experienced snow and ice during the winter months. There were several ski resorts in the area, that were frequented by people from surrounding states as well as by us locals. But since I was just a small child, we had not had a really great snowfall—not enough for those resorts to have a good season. We always looked and hoped for a good storm in mid-December to get the winter sports going and get us in a real Christmasy mood, but the years since that had happened were lost to my memory. My uncle Bob, Mom's brother, ran the local ski resort, and he really wanted snow. Mom worked for him, managing the ski shop, and she also hoped it would snow; but right then the prospects for a white Christmas seemed mighty slim.

The week before Christmas, I finished my final exams at college—I was a senior thinking of the future and its possibilities. I was preparing to enroll in graduate school the following fall to study mythology and folklore. I wanted to teach high school students and share with them my excitement for the myths and legends of the past. The tales of King Arthur had always fascinated me; I was able to take a class on Arthurian legends. It was in that class that I met a girl who shared my interests in mythology and ancient stories. She was new to the area, and I took her under my wing, sharing mealtimes with her, introducing her to my friends, and enjoying a cup of tea with her in the evenings while we talked of unicorns and dragons, ideas from the past, and plans for the future.

Crystal—that was her name. She was an unusual girl—she said she was 21, as I was, but she appeared younger and older at the same time. Her long, wavy blond hair hung to her waist, and it glowed and sparkled like gold. Her skin was clear, her cheeks pink, and her eyes ice blue. It was her eyes that carried her age and her wisdom; in them she seemed ageless. Her voice was clear, high-pitched, but very soft. She was tiny, barely five feet tall, but

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had a presence that filled a room when she entered. Her laugh sounded like tiny bells, and she laughed often. People seemed to enjoy being around her, and since the fall when she enrolled, she had made many friends.

She was also an English major, she said, studying literature. She said she wanted to work with young children. She had a gift for telling stories and told us she had a lot of practice back home. She said her family was from Iceland, and she had many younger brothers and sisters, cousins, nieces and nephews who spent long winter nights listening to her tell folk tales from all the Scandinavian countries. We never knew for sure where her home was. She had not gone home for Thanksgiving and was planning to stay in the college town for Christmas. Well, I didn't think that was such a good idea. Holidays for my family were times to be with each other and friends, to share home and hearth, and to enjoy each other's company. So I invited Crystal to spend the Christmas vacation with us. She seemed delighted with the invitation, since she had never been to my part of the country before.

Crystal and I arrived home on a Thursday evening, a week before Christmas. It was a clear night. The stars were sparkling like jewels in a black velvet sky, and it was crisp but not too cold. A magnificent evening, but no snow. Christmas decorations were hung from the lamp posts in the town and from the door frames and windows in my home. Our tree would stand at the bay window in our living room, decorated with tiny colored lights and the ornaments my Mom and I had collected over the years. My collection favored figures of characters from the legends I was so fond of—unicorns, magicians, elves, fairies, and the like. Many were gifts from friends and relatives, and each had a special meaning and place in our hearts.

We had dinner at home that evening, Mom and me and Crystal. We talked about how we would spend this next week getting ready for Christmas. Uncle Bob and his family would be coming to share Christmas dinner, exchange gifts, and sing carols. Friends and other family folks would be dropping in from time to time, so a priority was baking so we would have cookies aplenty to share and enjoy and make the house smell great. Picking the right gift for each friend and family member and wrapping each just so was one of my particular pleasures. And that Saturday, we went to pick out our Christmas tree, brought it home, and Crystal helped Mom and me decorate it. Crystal was fascinated by my extensive collection of mythical figures and made up stories about each one. It was

fun. That evening with the tree lit and a fire in the fireplace, we sat down with full cups of hot chocolate to listen to Christmas music and feel the spirit of the times.

Every now and then, either Mom or I would look hopefully out the window, wishing for a flake or two to start falling. Around 10:00 Crystal asked if she could be excused. She said she wanted to take a walk for a while—alone—to think about things. She put on her jacket, hat, and gloves, and went out into the starry night. She returned about half an hour later, a little pinker of cheek, and smiling. Shortly thereafter, while checking the weather, I watched a flake of snow fall and land on the branch of the pine tree growing outside our kitchen window. I could see its six-pointed crystalline design, delicate, lacy, fragile, almost ice-blue as it hung on the branch. It was followed by another and another, each soft and delicate, every one different and beautiful, decorating that tree with many tiny crystal ornaments. We gathered around the window to enjoy the view—delicate soft flurries, individual snowflakes falling slowly on our town.

When we woke the next morning, snow was everywhere. Each individual, tiny, six-pointed crystal of moisture had multiplied so none was now distinguishable. Three feet of snow covered lawns and sidewalks and the snowplows were busily plowing paths for cars to travel on the streets. It had snowed all night and was still snowing. Uncle Bob called and was delighted. The resort was already busy at 8:00 am, and they knew this would last through the holidays. Mom prepared to walk to Uncle Bob's home so he could take her to work in his four-wheel drive vehicle. I said good-bye to her, fixed myself a cup of hot chocolate, and went to the guest room to peek in and see if Crystal was awake yet. She was gone. On her pillow was a clear glass crystal snowflake ornament and a note that read, "Thanks! Merry Christmas!"

Practice Makes Perfect

Patricia Wilson
Frostburg State University

The ice is hard and smooth and clear.
It's slippery and it's wet.
She stands before it, skates in hand.
It's not been tested yet.

She slips the boots upon her feet—
Like gloves, they fit just right.
She pulls the laces firm and strong
And then she ties them tight.

She takes a step onto the ice
And feels the surface there.
The blade makes contact—makes its mark—
Can take her anywhere.

Both blades are on the surface now.
The rhythm slowly grows.
She pushes out to right, then left.
Her body glides and flows.

She makes a circuit of the ice,
And then begins the test.
She's practiced this for days and days.
This time she'll do her best.

She stands quite still, her left foot back—
Her right foot points ahead.
Her shoulders turned, the right in front.
Straight hips and straight, high head.

She bends her knees and pushes off,
The left foot leaves the ice.
She turns a left-hand circle on her
Inside edge, quite nice.

The circle done, she shifts her weight.
She turns now to the right.
The outside edge is inside now,
This circle nice and tight.

Right shoulder front, she goes around
To stop where she began.
An inside edge, an outside edge,
Two circles, oh, so grand!

She steps outside to take a look.
It is her best to date.
Her practice made it perfect—
A perfect figure 8!

Senior Citizens' Local History Writing

As a counterpoint to our Maryland Showcase for Young Writers section, this issue of the *Maryland English Journal* features the winning essays in the Allegany County Eighth Annual Senior Citizens' Local History Writing Contest. Allegany County is the only Maryland County to hold such a contest, and the annual nature of the event fosters an on-going writers' support network among the group members, many of whom enter each year. Contestants must be at least 60 years of age and must not have been employed as professional writers.

This years' contest generated 21 essays. Reprinted here are the five winning essays—first, second, and third place, by Virginia Lloyd, Alma G. Logsdon, and Mary O. Straw, respectively, as well as two essays by Helen L. Keady and Charles F. Kallmyer given honorable mention.

The contest is sponsored by the Allegany Human Resources Development Commission's Area Agency on Aging, in conjunction with the Allegany County Commissioners.

Ti Kar Nak

Virginia Lloyd

The history of Allegany County is full of Indian lore and legend. Many are the written and oral accounts of the American Indians who lived in our area long before the white man settled here. My story is about a Crow Indian who made Cumberland his home in the last years of his life. He touched many young persons and left with them a love of nature and a respect for Indian heritage.

Ti Kar Nak was born on December 3, 1894, in the Pryor Mountains in Montana, now called the Little Rockies. As the eldest son in his family, he was selected to attend the Warrior School, an Indian school taught by his godfather. He served in the United States army from 1913 to 1960, during which time he studied in Germany, Japan, China, Mexico, England, France, and at the University of Maryland. After discharge from the army, he managed a ranch in Montana for several years.

About the year 1970, Ti Kar Nak traveled by train to Western Maryland with his granddaughter, who was enrolling at Frostburg State College. It was then that he chose to take up residence in Cumberland, so she could know that she had family nearby. His new home was a small apartment at the corner of Gephart Drive and Cleveland Avenue. He turned his sitting room into a miniature Indian museum. Photos he had taken of the natural beauty of his Montana ranch, pictures of his three sons—Deer Foot, Elabbo, and Kit (small fox)—and beaded necklaces, belts, and other crafts

hung on the walls. While he was spending his retirement far from the reservation he knew, he felt close to home surrounded by all these reminders.

It was not long before the young people on the West Side discovered the friendly old Indian living a retired life in their neighborhood. Ti Kar Nak offered to share with them his skill for making beaded jewelry. His "museum" became a favorite stopping-in spot for them. While he taught them the details of making their jewelry, he entertained them with tales of old Indian legends. In return, they related their experiences as Cadette Girl Scouts with him. At the urging of his students, Girl Scout leaders invited him to troop meetings where he shared his love for all of nature, giving the girls the rare opportunity of learning first-hand about Indian customs.

It was not uncommon to see children heading up Gephart Drive carrying their boxes of beads, thread, and other sewing accessories. They would gather in his workshop many summer afternoons and work on their art. Ti Kar Nak would untangle their threads and teach them the intricate designs of their bracelets, necklaces, and belts. All the while he would entertain them with tales of his early life on the reservation. If Ti Kar Nak had one quality that outshone all others, it was patience, as he helped each little one with her projects.

Two of my daughters had the great experience of working with Ti Kar Nak. They still talk about the interesting stories he told them and treasure the necklaces and belts they made with his help. Recently, while leafing through old valuables in my cedar chest, I found a poem he had written and given them, comparing the Indian Harvest Festival with our Thanksgiving. The Harvest Festival was held on the night of the full moon, quite close to our Thanksgiving.

A Thanksgiving Tree

To stand in all its glory dressed in most beautiful gown, touched by the hand of Manito.

Great arms reaching to the sky.

The field of ripe corn, food for tomorrow.

All living, breathing things, made by his love for man. Should we not reach up our arms to the Great Spirit in thanks also for what we have been given and what we know will be given, again and again? Everlasting, never changing. Love of Life in all its forms.

This, my young ones, is what Kar Nak wishes for you to understand.

With love,
Ti Kar Nak

Ti Kar Nak has passed on and is now with the Great Spirit he worshipped. But many of our young people have a closer bond with our Native Americans and a love for nature which he shared with them. We in Allegany County are fortunate that he chose to spend his last years in Western Maryland.

My First Teaching Assignment

Alma G. Logsdon

The summer following my graduation from Frostburg State Teachers College in 1934 seemed unending. Daily I met our mail carrier anxiously awaiting a letter from the Board of Education.

I was deeply grateful that my parents had put such great emphasis on acquiring a good education. It had been a sacrifice on their part for me to attend college and a hardship for them to acquire the necessary $35 for tuition. The Great Depression had taken its toll. Many high school classmates were not so fortunate. They joined the work force to bolster the meager family income. Some quit school on their sixteenth birthday to earn a few dollars to help put food on the table at home.

Finally on August 24 a letter arrived. In a few days, I was assigned to Green Ridge School. But where was Green Ridge?

Visitors from Pittsburgh took me to see the school. We drove almost to Paw Paw, West Virginia, before turning onto a dirt road to the top of the mountain to a sign which read "Merten's Avenue." The avenue was a wide path through the woods for several miles to a sign, "Watch Out for Children." Rounding a curve, we saw three houses. About a quarter of a mile beyond them, we found the school—an old brown unpainted building nestled among the trees on the side of a hill. Never will I forget the sinking feeling I had at that moment. All the country schools I had seen were nicely painted, had a playground, and were close to several homes. Green Ridge School certainly was a shocking exception to my mental picture.

My next problem was finding transportation from Frostburg to the school. Since we had no automobile, I paid a neighbor to take me on Monday morning to Cumberland by 6:30. From there I rode

the B & O train to Magnolia, West Virginia. Carrying my suitcase, I walked a railroad trestle which crossed the Potomac River and the C & O Canal. It was a single track with only one small platform that held a barrel on it. Twice I heard a train coming, but was fortunate in reaching the Maryland side ahead of it. I also remember one morning when the crossties were icy. It never was a comfortable feeling to look down at water flowing not too far beneath my feet. On Friday evenings, the procedure was reversed. When the days were shorter, I had to flag the train by burning a piece of rolled newspaper or using a flashlight. From Cumberland, I rode a bus back to Frostburg.

During the school week, the pupils were dismissed at 3:30, while I remained at school making preparations for the next day. I straightened furniture, arranged supplies, wrote assignments on the board, and completed various other tasks. About five o'clock, I locked the school and walked a mile to my home away from home. Here I boarded with a widow and spent my after-dinner time at the kitchen table, working on lesson plans for the next day before climbing the stairs to my unheated bedroom.

College education courses did not prepare me for teaching nineteen pupils enrolled in seven grades in the confines of one classroom. What an awesome responsibility. Where it was possible, grades were combined. Of necessity, class periods were short. As the year progressed, I no longer focused on the adverse physical aspects of the school, but on the needs of the boys and girls. They were so eager to learn and to help one another.

Often it was difficult to adapt the curriculum to the background knowledge of the pupils. In social studies, one group was to learn about firemen and policemen. Had the subject been the revenue officer, the children would have been most vocal. A number of them argued about whose father made the best moonshine. When they asked me to settle their argument, I told them I had no way of knowing. "Why don't you come to see the still?" they asked. Of course, that was one invitation I did not accept. I had been told that the manufacturers shot first and then asked questions.

Most of the parents were very cooperative. For some, it was a hardship to send their children to school regularly, particularly the older ones who could help with chores at home. The exception was Mrs. B. She was mad at me for marking her older son absent when he did not attend school. She had "borned her children" and felt she had a right to do with them what she pleased. One after-

noon following dismissal, a child came back into school saying excitedly, "You had better run. Here comes Mrs. B." All I could think of were some stories I had heard about her. One time she met a bill collector at the door holding a hatchet in her hand. Another time, she poured a teakettle of hot water from the upstairs window on an unwanted visitor. When she entered the room, I greeted her with a smile and asked about her health. I offered her a chair, but kept my desk between us. After a few minutes of pleasantries, I explained some school regulations and cleared up some misunderstandings. Surprisingly, it was an amiable conference.

Many parents were reluctant to send their children to school during inclement weather. Some homes were several miles from school. Bad weather was no reason to cancel classes, no matter how much snow was on the ground. One morning it was so deep that I had to be taken on horseback to school.

There was one very memorable event that year. A twelve year old fifth grader gave birth to a daughter. She was listed as the youngest mother in Maryland.

I probably learned as much as the pupils, but in a different dimension. I do know I earned my monthly salary of $79.20. It was a year to remember, but not one I would care to repeat.

The Way It Was

Mary O. Straw

Local history is the knowledge which deals with recorded events of or pertaining to a particular place. I am recording my recollection of the tri-state area of Western Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

Prior to the arrival of Scotch-Irish and German immigrants, the region was inhabited by Shawnee Indians. The Potomac River was the main artery for travel. With the arrival of the nineteenth century a wave of new immigrants passed through the area on their way to the Ohio Valley and points west. In 1818, the National Pike and later the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and Chesapeake and Ohio Canal brought steady population growth and economic development to the area.

My parents migrated here early in the twentieth century, and I was born on September 30, 1907. This is my record of observations and recollections of this era when children were to be seen and not heard. I was frequently puzzled by what I heard and saw,

but I was not bold enough to ask for explanations, particularly in lighthearted matters of attire and in some serious matters related to local effects of the catastrophic 1918 epidemic of Spanish influenza.

I have vivid mental pictures of how people were attired. I spent much time studying the large framed photographs which were displayed at my eye level on easels in home parlors. The poses were rigid and the individuals wore their "best bib and tucker."

A woman's hair was her shining glory. The hair arrangements were elaborate and indicative of the hair's abundance. Some ladies had photos which proved their claim that they could sit upon their hair because of its remarkable length. The ladies excelled in the ability to plait their tresses. Teenage girls often appeared with long thick plaits upon which a large bow of wide ribbon was attached. Their supply of colorful ribbons was a matter of pride.

The skirts were floor length and were daintily lifted with approaching stairs. I was perplexed when I overheard men whispering among themselves that they had glimpsed a woman's ankles. Didn't they know that all women had ankles? My father operated a butcher shop on a street corner that was the point at which streetcars picked up passengers. When hobble skirts were in style he observed that often men would gather to watch the hobble skirted ladies negotiate the steps as they boarded the trolley. Why, I wondered, did adults engage in such peculiar behavior? Can you imagine them viewing the mini-skirts worn today? Other unusual clothing styles I observed were leg-of-mutton sleeves and high collars which tightly encircled and totally obscured the ladies' throats. They were embellished with elegant stitchery and often displayed a lovely small golden ornament. Hats were another important item of apparel. A woman always wore a hat outdoors. I enjoyed gazing into the many millinery store windows at the display of hats.

The men also wore hats when appearing outdoors. Every man must have owned a derby, a fedora, and a billed cap. In the summer they wore fine Panama straw hats or flat crowned numbers with a stiff brim often referred to as "skimmers." Both sexes wore high shoes that were fastened with laces or buttons. Special metal devices with a hook at one end were used to fasten the buttons. High button shoes were fashionable, but prone to lose their buttons. The hooks were usually received as a gift when the shoes were purchased. The shoes were made of leather throughout and could be readily mended. Most households owned lasts and men

were often skillful in shoe mending. If this was lacking there were many competent cobblers who would perform the repair job. It was customary for boys to wear knee pants, and they did not don long pants until they reached their sixteenth birthday.

I was a teenager before my family acquired electricity in our home. Present day electrical appliances and stoves were slow in appearing. The first mechanical washing machine used by my mother was powered by a water hose connected to the kitchen sink faucet. We considered it marvelous! Women did the laundry on washboards and were considered fortunate if they had a hand turned wringer. All clothing and linens were ironed by sad irons that were heated on the stove. Indoor plumbing was rare, and many housewives had to draw water from pumps or outdoor faucets for laundry purposes.

Before the first World War, few women were gainfully employed. Those who were employed worked as dressmakers, seamstresses, teachers, milliners, nurses, domestics, or paperhangers. Locally, some women worked in the Footer Dye Works or silk mills and in stores as sales clerks. The war created a shortage of workmen, and women entered many occupations which men or boys had heretofore held. I was amazed when I saw a woman in 1918 wearing coveralls and guarding the railroad crossing as a watchman.

Before the celebrated arrival of Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, a disastrous epidemic of Spanish influenza raged over the world, claiming an appalling number of victims. It reached our region in early October and was no respecter of persons. It claimed the young and old, but youthful adults were especially vulnerable. Very few homes escaped its ravages. Emergency hospitals were opened. Care was scarce because doctors and nurses were ill or dying also. Volunteers were pressed into service. All business and service establishments were operated on an emergency basis or closed. This included drugstores and undertaking or funeral establishments. The short block where we resided along with fifteen other families experienced seven deaths in two weeks. A loss which touched me significantly was that of a neighbor's eighteen month old daughter. Two of her older sisters were my close friends. The little tot was a happy child with a delightful disposition who had been readily included in our activities. After she died her father walked to the undertaker's place of business and was told that with their unusual workload and meager remnant of a work staff that they could be of limited assistance. Luckily, they had a remaining coffin of suitable size, and the bereaved father carried it

on his shoulder to his home. The grave diggers were behind schedule, and he was informed that he would be notified when the grave was prepared. The family clergyman told the father that he would be notified when he could arrange the burial service. My father owned the only automobile in the neighborhood so at the appointed time he, along with another neighbor and the father of the child, placed the casket on the back seat of his venerable Dodge touring car, and the three men rode in the front seat. They proceeded to Rose Hill Cemetery and awaited the arrival of the minister. Following a brief religious service, the three men lowered the body into the grave, and the cemetery attendants filled the small grave. That sad event remains poignantly in my memory.

That's the way it was as I recall during the early years of the twentieth century.

The Queen

Helen L. Keady

There will always be a special place in my heart for the Queen City Railroad Station in Cumberland because we spent many an hour letting her entertain us. She was the best day care center I ever knew. Above all, she always made me feel welcome. I was born into a railroad family in 1930 and through them and my grandpa, "the good old days" were drenched in the B&O Railroad, and that was our source of entertainment. You may laugh at that, but in the aftermath of a depression and all that good stuff, it was a pure delight to play there.

My family, being railroaders, and I, being a railroad brat, got to ride the train free, so keeping company with the Queen was fun. The fun was unlimited because we knew some people who worked there. I loved the conductors who were usually chubby and jolly and wore horn rimmed glasses. They would lift you on and off the train. Once you got on they would come around teasing and tickling you and take you to the dining car and give you something good to eat. It was so nice to be there and know you were wanted. On the trip home, always at night, the Queen lit up and was a sight to behold. The staion was so majestic and regal; no wonder my grandpa called her the Queen.

The life of the Queen integrated into my young life through friends I knew who worked there. My best girl friend at that time was such a pal. Her dad was a ticket agent at the station, and

often we got to visit by taking his lunch or supper to him. He often gave us a tour of the place, and with our noses pressed against the windows we could see into the beautiful ballroom. Although I was too young to go dancing then, I later learned that a number of good dance bands graced the Queen with their presence.

When the old "Capital Limited" pulled into the station, the fun began—people everywhere, the red top porter was pulling the baggage wagons, and Astor Cabs were filling up to take people home. The Queen and her spider web of tracks in its day were the cross section of the East—people transporting people and freight to almost anywhere.

The history surrounding this little mini mall touched our lives more than we realized. As we know, things never stay the same; life goes on and sometimes the Queen wept. The clouds of World War II loomed over Cumberland, as it did all over this nation, and the Queen and I were forced to witness great sadness and joy as the troop trains became a part of our lives for the next four years. My family spent many hours watching those trains pull out, taking our young men to war and bringing them home. Fortunately, the young men in our family came home, but some of our friend's sons and daughters did not, and the Queen stood the test as best she could.

So here we are today looking at the same little town through different glasses. Somewhat more modern and sophisticated with concrete roads spread out like crazy. Today, like any other day, I drive by where the Old Queen stood; my heart sinks a little, and I wonder what she would have looked like now if we had only stopped to give her a face lift, instead of tearing her down in 1977 to build the Park Street Post Office. The cold brick building that houses the post office today won't ever hold a candle to the elegance of the Queen. She held center stage for years and took the Nobel Prize for serving humanity of all ages.

The Hoffman Giants

Charles F. Kallmyer

Life in Hoffman, a mining village of about twenty homes located three miles outside Frostburg, was hard and depressing for its residents in the early 1930s. Most of us kids growing up there did not realize it because we all were in the same situation.

Feeding a family of seven had to be my parents' greatest worry. My mother and older sister canned vegetables from our large garden, along with raspberries and huckleberries that we picked. We had chickens for eggs and meat, supplemented by the game my father and older brother, Raymond, obtained while hunting. We spent hours cutting wood and carrying coal from the mine for cooking and heating our home.

The Hoffman mine closed, and my father had gone to work at a mine in Eckhart. Even then, work was very slow, and on pay day Dad may have owed the coal company. We lived in a company house, and he was assessed a fee to pay the blacksmith to sharpen his tools even if he had not worked. Dad also had to pay for his insurance in case he got hurt at work.

Naturally, there was no money for recreation. The baseball team became the town's one and only interest. My father, nicknamed Bird by his friends, was manager, and my older brother played on the team. Townspeople held socials to raise money for uniforms. People came from all around the area to enjoy the banjo and guitar music and homemade foods. Banks were closing daily so the money earned from the socials was kept in our home. Mother placed it in a tin can that once held tea, and she moved its hiding place each night, fearing we might be robbed. In a short time the team was able to purchase used New York Giant uniforms, and thus the team became known as the Hoffman Giants.

On the morning of a game, all the kids in town would be present to pick pebbles from the infield after it was smoothed by dragging it with a piece of railroad rail. Almost everyone in town attended the games. Cheering spectators stood or sat under the huge oak trees that lined the ball field. Midway through each game a voluntary collection was taken to help purchase needed balls and bats, although some bats were actually made by team members.

One of the summer highlights was when the Frostburg black community was invited over for a Sunday double header. It must have been a big day for them because they seemed to enjoy the games more than anyone I had ever seen. It was easy to see they were glad to be with us, and we were equally delighted they were spending the day in Hoffman.

The games were not taken seriously; fun was the top priority. One instance I will never forget involved Joe Donahoe or George Skidmore, who were crafty cutups. One of these players popped a fly ball over the shortstop's head and then immediately ran up past

the pitcher's mound, past the umpire who was stationed there in those days, and directly to second base, by-passing first base. After the ball was retrieved, the Frostburg players who had observed his trickery appealed to the umpire who was black. He would not call the Hoffman player out. I can still hear him saying, "I didn't see it. I didn't see it!" I am sure this act was not done to win the game but to add to the enjoyment that we were filled with on that day. The games allowed the adults to take their minds off the more trying problems of the time.

For many years a picture of the Hoffman Giants hung in my parents' home. My brother Raymond's death in February 1995 marked the passing of the last of the team members. I will always treasure the jovial, blissful times I had watching them play teams from the George's Creek area and from as far away as Dixie, the site of the Cumberland airport. The community pride and spirit that team generated will live in my heart forever.

Biographical Sketches

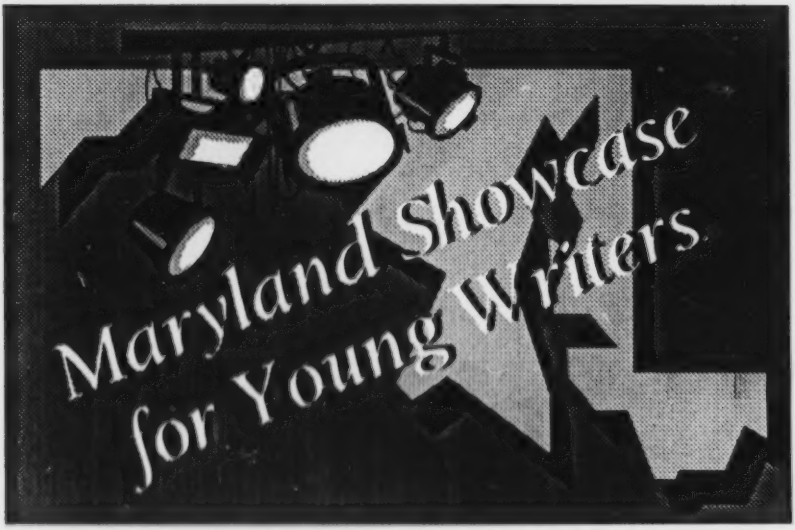
Virginia Lloyd earned a BA in chemistry from Seton Hill College in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. She worked as the Allegany Ballistics Laboratory librarian from 1947-1953 and as an elementary school teacher at St. Peter and Paul's and St. John Neumann's Schools from 1965-1982. Lloyd has served as choir director and organist at St. Ambrose Catholic Church since 1954. She currently functions as corporate secretary of Friends Aware and enjoys 10 grandchildren.

Alma G. Logsdon, a graduate of Beall High School in Frostburg, received a bachelor's degree from Frostburg State in 1934 and later an MA from the University of Maryland. For 39 years she served the Allegany County Schools as a teacher and elementary principal. A veteran of the Army Air Force during World War II, she is a charter member of the Allegany County League of Women Voters and a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an international honorary society for women educators. Logsdon is active in church work and enjoys crafts, gardening, and upholstering.

Mary O. Straw graduated from Frostburg Normal School in 1927 and worked as a public school teacher, most recently at Westside School in Allegany County. Her interests include genealogy, studying local history, and quilting. She is chaplain of the Jane Frazier Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and registrar of the Colonial Dames of the 17th Century, Elizabeth Hundred Chapter (she had a documented ancestor in the country before 1701). Straw also enjoys spending time with her 2 children, 4 grandchildren, and 7 great-grandchildren.

Helen L. Keady graduated from Cumberland's Fort Hill High School in 1948. She worked as a restaurant cook in Allegany County for 27 years. She has two grown children—a son and a daughter— and now works as an aid at the Frostburg Senior Center. Mrs. Keady sings with the tri-state Ladies Barbershop Harmony Singers and enjoys baby-sitting, meeting people, and writing.

Charles F. Kallmeyer graduated in 1942 from Beall High School in Frostburg and worked as a machinist at National Jet, Allegany Ballistics Laboratory, and Pittsburg Plate and Glass before retiring in 1986. His hobbies include making wine from grapes he grows himself, gardening, and golfing.



This showcase features writing of young people in the third through eighth grades. The writing was submitted by teachers as follows. **Frederick County:** Windsor Knolls Middle School—Beth Kremer and Ann Zanotti; **Harford County:** Aberdeen Middle School—Carol Bronis; **Montgomery County:** Sligo Adventist—Denise Jones and Fred Khandagle, and Somerset Elementary—Maggie Bisti and Amy Zinkievich; **Prince George's County:** Greenbelt Middle School—Deborah Hoeper; **Queen Anne's County:** Sudlersville Middle School—Sally Cuttler and Mary-Beth Goll.

JUST DRIFTED MEMORIES

I sit within the black of night;
the thoughts of you fade through;
I remember what was once forgotten,
the love; the pain was all so true.

Now, as I listen to the wolves cry loud,
the bright full moon leads the way for tomorrow;
As I watch the red sky fade,
I melt and circle around my own sorrow.

The salty tears blur my vision,
the breeze seems to whistle your name;
I wish I could hold your trust again,
Even though I know it will never be the same.

—Lisa Ali, Grade 8

HEARTBROKEN

Deep
inside my
soul, words are
left unspoken. I feel
sad. Songs are never sung,
the sun never shines.
Sometimes I think
it's a miracle
I'm still
alive

—Andrea Douglas, Grade 8

RACISM

I have experienced racism:
It makes you feel isolated and inferior;
Even movies nowadays depict it
very graphically.
Racism overcomes you with fear and rage;
If you are prejudiced or put down racially,
You have the most profound feeling of
hate and vulnerability.
It eats inside you and makes you
hate yourself
And the person who hurt you.
Racism has the look of innocence,
The smell of roses,
And the sting of a thousand bees.
It's like a sphere of blackness
that envelops you so fast that
It feels like someone turned off your
kind, loving feelings
And replaced them with evil, vulgar,
nasty thoughts.
Racism is a disease,
Not one that you want.
Racism has to stop.
I've known racism.

—Carlos Howe, Grade 7

THE FIRST LOOK

When I first looked at you,
I knew you were the one I was going to marry.
When I first looked at you,
I knew you would treat me right.
When I first looked at you,
I knew no one could tear us apart.
When I first looked at you,
I knew that we were meant to be.

—Andrea Douglas, Grade 8

LOVE

Love, bursting through
the windows of the heart,
is a very special thing.
It can be felt
with the deepest of emotions.
Way down inside
there is joy,
the will to do anything
for another.
If only there could be love
on the other side.

—Laura Cuttler, Grade 7

RESPECT

All I want is a little
Respect,
A little space,
A place where
I can do what I want,
Somewhere,
where no one but I can come;
A place I can call my own,
Somewhere
I can make a mess,
Or clean it up
whenever I want;
A place I can be alone,
And have some
Respect
all my own

—Caryn Thomas, Grade 6

CONFUSION

Confusion is a misplaced key
growing smaller as you grasp for it;
It is the frustration of an unfinished puzzle
scattered across the floor;
Confusion embodies all past ignorance
and pushes it back to you;
Confusion is the noisy thoughts
that fill your mind and force the answers out;
Confusion is a storm cloud passing overhead
in a moment of weakness.

—Priya Gomer, Grade 8

WHAT MY THIRD EAR CAN HEAR

My third ear can hear my hair screaming
when I comb out the tangles;
My third ear can hear the basketballs
complaining when we dribble them;
My third ear can hear my toys
talking to each other;
My third ear can hear the food in the freezer
trying to warm up;
My third ear can hear my sneakers crying,
"Wash your socks!"

—Fanny Agbanyim, Grade 6

SCARED

You bring it home in a small box so that no one can see
what you have,
Then put it in a small frying pan and cook it in a corner
all by yourself,
Sprinkle a little bit of garlic on it to keep the vampires
away,
Serve on a small, chipped plate in a very dark
and cold room.
It tastes like the cobwebs on the railings of an old,
abandoned house;
In your stomach it is heavy, and then it feels like
bats flying around in a cave.

—Erin Fair Rhoades, Grade 8

FEELINGS ALIVE!

When I am worried,
I am like a light in a storm,
  blinking on and off;
When I am alone,
I am like a car in a junk yard;
When I am scared,
I am like an ant on the floor
  of a full auditorium;
When I am happy,
I am like a hawk
  that just spotted its prey;
When I am depressed,
I am like a fish
  with a hook in its mouth;
When I am anxious,
I am like a squirrel
  looking for nuts;
When I am furious,
I am like an erupting volcano.

—Haley Proctor, Grade 4

BASKETBALL

I creep up behind her like a tiger on its prey,
Ready to strike at any time of day;
As she goes to the basket, a gazelle in flight,
I come from behind and take the ball with all my might;
I race down the court like a cheetah on the plains,
I dunk at the other end—no one complains.

—Amanda Peters, Grade 8

FRUSTRATION

It's a big red splash of paint;
It sneaks up like a hungry shark
  and gives a powerful blow;
It's like sitting in the middle of a party
  while trying to do homework,
Or like a long road leading to a dead end;
It tastes like a cold pizza with a bitter lime topping;
It's graffiti on the subways of New York.

—Nevin Barnett, Grade 8

I'VE KNOWN SALISBURY

Its country smells of comfort
And reminds me of a real home;
The people are countrified
And a real family;
The food is nourishing—
You never get enough of fresh corn,
green beans, chicken and dumplings;
The sight grabs your attention
And makes you want to sleep in the
green grass
And swim in the orangy sunset water;
The sky stays blue with cotton clouds;
The taste of its water reminds you of
a clear water spring;
The air wraps you in a comforting home.

—Autumn King, Grade 7

THE BAY

Sparkling streams feed it
Ocean waves tantalize it
Crabs love it
Plants thrive because of it
People swim in it
Fish spawn in it
Watermen survive because of it

—Laura Cuttler, Grade 7

KENT ISLAND

A place of friendly faces
No competition of the races

Quiet towns joined as one
Days of gentle laughter and fun

A place where the sky is just more clear
And next door neighbors just more dear

—Tovi Perman, Grade 7

WHALE SONG

I sing of the hundreds of pounds of shrimp,
krill and squid I eat everyday;
I sing of swimming with dolphins, prancing with
orcas and racing with tiger sharks;
I sing of birds of the sea, whales,
Swiftly gliding close to the bottom of the ocean.
Forgetting my worries, I glide low
over Neptune's garden of seaweed,
Spinning around the coral reef,
showing off to all the underwater animals.

—Alex Stewart, Grade 3

ORCA WHALES

Ocean life, Cetacea
Intelligent, echolocating species
Like a tub
Gentler than a child
Missing family, pod
Release from captivity
Endangered species
Orca

—Michelle Adam, Grade 8

BLACK IS . . .

Slippery as the ice on a winter day,
The fury of the thunderous sea,
A piece of the night sky,
The smell of the dark forest,
A wild horse galloping through the air,
The warm feeling running through your spine,
The roar of a lion.

—Maja Popovic, Grade 4

ORANGE

Orange is a crisp autumn day;
It is a mountain wearing its pre-winter coat;
It is fiery blazing color,
Yet more than a gentle red.
It is an angry color, bursting with heat!
It is your mouth on fire

After a Jalapeno pepper;
It is the feeling in your fists
After your sister has cracked a porcelain doll.
It is a towering, fiery color;
That's orange.

—Elizabeth Powers, Grade 4

I AM...

I am a turtle
  hiding in my shell whenever I am afraid
I am liquid silver—
  you can see your reflection in me;
I am the whisper of falling snowflakes,
  quiet and healing;
I am a dandelion gone to seed,
  wondering where the wind will take me;
I am the feel of the rough bark on an oak tree;
I am the smell of autumn leaves
  piled on the sidewalk;
I am the daughter of the ocean
  rushing to meet the land;
I am the taste of frost on fresh blueberries;
I am the dream of a fire
  waiting to be kindled.

—Anne Halstead, Grade 8

NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRIT POEM

The moon teaches the tides to rise and fall;
The great white shark teaches poison ivy
  how to scare people;
The cobra teaches the ocean to ripple the sand;
The bear teaches the winter to hibernate;
The seasons teach the Himalayas
  to change slowly;
The kelp teach the tree's leaves to wave;
Everything teaches everything else something—
Making our world.

—Jamie Pott, Grade 5

THE WORLD IS ROUND

A long time ago
People thought
The world was flat—
But it is not.

A man named Chris
Decided to
Prove them wrong—
That's what he would do!

He got all his friends
And together they
Sailed around the world—
It took many a day!

He seemed to be smart—
A philosopher—
But he seemed to go one way
And ended up going the other.

Nevertheless,
He proved what he found,
That the world is not flat,
It is definitely round!

—Tovi Perman, Grade 7

TIME TO GET UP

It's too bad that we have to go to school, isn't it? I love to sleep. If I didn't have to go to school, I think I would sleep until 12:00. But, unfortunately, I have to get up at 6:30 because the bus comes at 7:30.

My mom has always had a hard time waking me up. She started out trying to wake me by shouting at me and calling me. I don't think so! I didn't move. That would never wake me up in a million years. Then, she bought me an alarm clock that had a radio and two alarms on it. That didn't work either. I didn't move. Next, she tried to put my clothes on me while I was asleep. She even picked me up and carried me out to the family room. I didn't move. She yelled and called and told me to get up immediately. I still refused to get up! She would get really mad and frustrated, and she would ground me sometimes. It didn't matter. I still wouldn't get up.

This past Christmas my parents bought me a new watch. The watch has an alarm. First, I set it and tied it to my bed post. The

alarm went off in the morning. No luck! I even tied the watch to my ear, but it still didn't wake me up. My mom said, "If you don't start getting up, you will be punished." It didn't work.

Finally, my mom did the wildest thing that no one else would ever think of. My room is right next to the bathroom, and the running water in there makes a lot of noise. My mom turned on the water full blast. Because that noise of the water running and hitting the bathtub was so annoying, it woke me up every day! I got up then and jumped into the tub, even though a bad thing happened almost every day. The water wasn't the right temperature. Some days it was too hot, and most days it was too cold.

One day, even the water idea didn't work. My mom started it and called me. I didn't get up. After about five minutes she called me again. I still didn't get up. Then the phone rang. My mom answered it. The bathtub water was still running, and my mom was still talking. Finally I got up, and the tub was overflowing! I freaked out. Quickly I turned the water off and drained some of it out and dried up the water on the floor.

Some days I think nothing will work! So, if I'm not at school one day, you will know why! I will be sleeping, and my mom will be trying to wake me up.

—Michael Seraphin, Grade 6

JOY FOREVER

Though there is sometimes
sadness in what we must
leave behind, there is joy
in every new tomorrow.

—Jamie Pott, Grade 5

Maryland English Journal

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- "Where Is Your ID?": The Literacy Narrative of a Bilingual, Bicultural Student
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Volume 30, Number 2 Spring 1996

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3. Submit only completed manuscripts.
4. Send manuscripts to the editor, ***Maryland English Journal***, at the address below. The ***Journal*** welcomes submissions at any time. However, to facilitate our review and publication timelines, submissions are particularly invited by **March 10** and **September 10**.

Review Process

Associate editors review blind submissions, a process that can take up to three months. Accepted manuscripts may need to be edited for clarity, organization, language, or style. Published authors will receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their submission appears.

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From the Editor's Desk

From the Desk of the Production Editor
(Pinch hitting for the Editor)

Surprisingly to us, this issue of *MEJ* ends up being a theme issue. As production editor for the last couple of years, I have tried to urge Richard Gebhardt's philosophy about such issues on the staff—if a theme issue happens to come together from submissions on hand, that's fine. Otherwise, don't worry about it. As this issue came together, we discovered that five of six articles related to the same subject.

The theme for this issue concerns ESOL students' problems in adjusting to speaking and writing English in academic settings from high school to college. The first article examines how changing our attitudes towards ESOL students can improve the students' education and our own effectiveness. The second article, actually a kind of triptych, leads us through lesson planning that can help all students, traditional and ESOL, to better understand the subjects and each other in speech, literature, and writing classes. The last thematic article tells the frustrating story of an intelligent, motivated Hispanic student's struggle against the tyranny of standard English usage embedded in an Anglo-centric university system.

Rounding off the issue is the regular Showcase for Young Writers and a profile of one of *MEJ*'s stalwart supporters and co-supervisor of the Showcase, Carol F. Peck, a contribution of our current *MEJ* intern.

Again, please write us to tell us how we're doing. Write articles and share your wisdom with us and other teachers across the state. We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Richard M. Johnson

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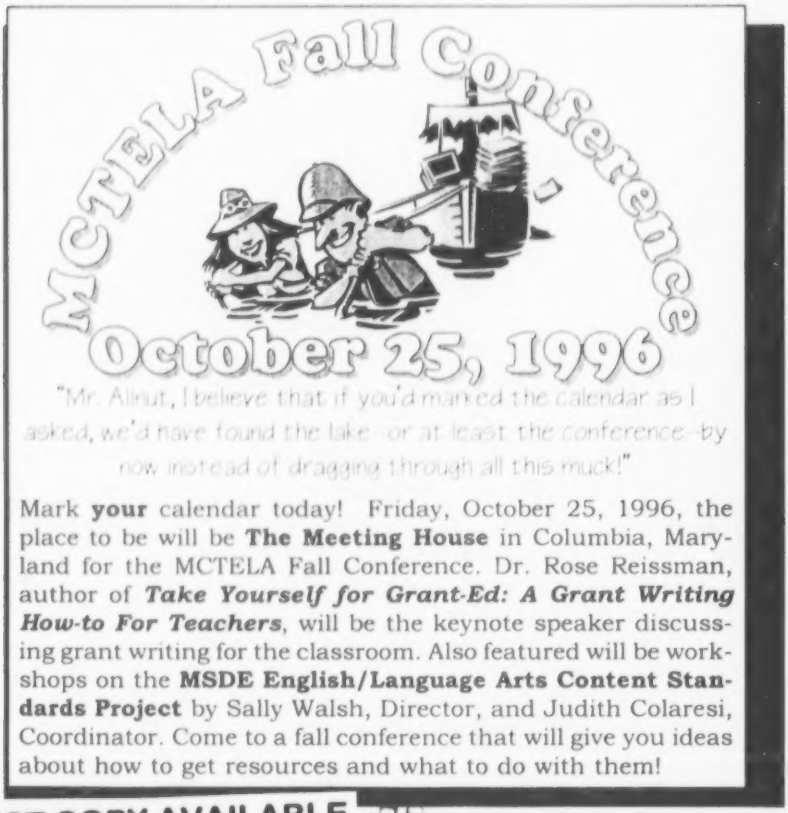
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Maryland English Journal
Volume 30, Number 2

Understanding Limited English Proficiency Students: Strategies for Non-ESOL Teachers

Jennifer Wilmer
Martha Rowe Dolly
Frostburg State University

The dramatic increase in the number of non-native students in Maryland over the past decade poses problems for non-ESOL teachers, most of whom never anticipated working with students of limited English proficiency (LEPs). Following Penfield's 1987 *TESOL Quarterly* study, which found many misconceptions about ESOL students and teachers among non-ESOL teachers, this paper examines several misconceptions about second language learning and teaching common among "regular" teachers in Maryland and provides strategies and recommendations for working with the ESOL students who more and more often are appearing in their classrooms.

All of us are subject to misconceptions, perhaps most when we forget that we are. In talking with non-ESOL teachers about second language teaching and learning, the two of us have been asked about (among other things) "all those different languages" we speak. Although both of us can survive in Spanish, we could come up with only a few words of Japanese or Serbo-Croatian between us. Shortly after our discussion about such misconceptions, one of us fell into a similar one while visiting a school for the deaf. It turned out that many teachers who seemed to be signing so fluently to their students were not using American Sign Language at all but rather a rudimentary signing system. Naiveté about deaf education led to a misconception similar to those we frequently encounter among non-ESOL teachers.

We intend to address several of the misconceptions surrounding second language teaching and learning, especially those common among "regular" English and language arts teachers in schools with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programs, and to offer some suggestions for interacting with the ESOL teachers encountered in hallways or meetings and with the occasional limited English proficiency student (LEP) who shows up in the "regular" classroom. In referring to "regular" teachers, we follow Penfield's 1987 study of the perceptions of non-ESOL teachers,

Jennifer Wilmer is a 1995 graduate in English education from Frostburg State who interned in a Montgomery County ESOL program. In 1994, she was enrolled in Second Language Acquisition Theory and ESL Methods, taught by Martha Rowe Dolly, an Associate Professor of English at FSU. Wilmer has also served as a volunteer tutor in the ESOL tutoring program for refugees which Dolly developed.

using "regular" to mean that in most ("regular") American classrooms, teachers work primarily with native speakers of English (21). Since the number of non-native students in Maryland is growing at a rate faster than the national average and now totals more than 16,000, ESOL and regular English teachers need to cooperate in helping these students progress as much as possible.

Our sense of the most prevalent misconceptions comes from several sources. One of us has interned with ESOL specialists in Montgomery County, and both of us have, formally or informally, observed ESOL tutoring in Allegany County; some of our observations are supported or supplemented by Penfield's survey of the perceptions of regular teachers in New Jersey. We draw also on our background in second language acquisition theory and on teaching and tutoring a variety of non-native speakers in other settings. The first section of this paper reports on misconceptions about second language learning and teaching encountered in the internship; the second section addresses these issues and related ones, concluding with some suggestions for working with LEP students in regular classrooms.

Common Misconceptions about Second Language Learning and Teaching

Throughout the past year, I, Jennifer Wilmer, have been fortunate enough to be involved in two extremely enriching teaching experiences in Montgomery County. In both cases, I acted as a teacher's aide in ESOL classes. In my first experience, I worked in a summer school course for adults; there were approximately thirty-five students representing as many as twenty-five different languages. My second experience was in a well-developed ESOL program at the high school level in which as many as ninety-five different languages were represented. In the short period of time that I spent in both experiences, I learned a great deal about the ESOL students and the role of the ESOL teacher. However, what I found to be the most enlightening part of the experience was what I learned about the regular classroom teachers, many of whom have misconceptions about LEP students and the role of ESOL teachers.

One basic misconception I encountered focuses on the ESOL students' cultures. The main reason that so many misconceptions about ESOL students exist is that many regular teachers know little about the students' cultures and choose to blame the students' cultures for any and every problem. That is not to say that learning about ninety-five different cultures is an easy or even ex-

pected task; however, some awareness about a student's culture is a necessity. According to Bill Donnelly, Head of the ESOL Department at Sherwood High School, some regular teachers group students according to the language that the students speak rather than the actual culture of the students. For example, Donnelly states that some regular teachers seem unaware that not all Latinos share the same culture just because they share the same language. Making assumptions about culture leads to stereotyping, which in turn leads to "negative interpretations of LEP behavior, and these no doubt interfere with the learning process" (Penfield 31).

One misconception that could interfere with the learning process centers around the ESOL students' proficiency in English. Not all ESOL students can be categorized as LEPs. Although the majority in the high school program are enrolled in the highest ESOL level and are mainstreamed in six regular classes, attending only one ESOL class a day, some regular teachers assume that all non-native students are extremely limited in proficiency. For example, one day my cooperating teacher asked me to take an ESOL student, who had become very proficient in English, to the computer lab to print the student's autobiography. When we entered the lab, I asked the regular teacher if the student could print something quickly. First the teacher looked at the student and then at me and, with a discouraging look, agreed to allow the student to print his paper. In this particular computer lab, no students are allowed to touch the printers. As the student walked toward the printer, the teacher yelled across the room, "STOP! STOP!" All the students in the lab turned and looked at him. The teacher ran to the student and very slowly and loudly stated, "You. . . are. . . not . . . allowed. . . to. . . touch!" Shocked, the student stood stunned and embarrassed. I also felt embarrassment for this student because he was printing a fifteen-page autobiography written completely in English, yet the teacher treated him as if he had just arrived in the country and did not know a word of English. During the short time I assisted in the high school, I encountered this same misconception on several other occasions.

Another misconception concerns the ESOL students' parents. In most cases, the parents do lack proficiency in English, and their inability to communicate with the teachers effectively further frustrates regular teachers (Penfield 29). The misconception occurs when regular teachers mistake the parents' inability to communicate for a lack of desire to communicate. Donnelly stated that in most of his adult education ESOL classes, many parents feel in-

timidated about meeting with their children's teachers due to the parents' lack of proficiency in the language and lack of knowledge about the education system in the United States. A related problem is that even though regular teachers rarely have contact with any parent, "they nevertheless attribute discipline problems to the parent," especially in the case of Hispanic families (Penfield 31). My experience in the adult education ESOL class contradicts these opinions. The majority of the adults in our class were parents with children in the public schools. Not only were the adults extremely enthusiastic about learning English, but many of the parents looked forward to being able to communicate with their children's teachers. I am currently tutoring a woman from Bosnia who has two children in the Allegany County schools. She has met with her children's teachers and is very concerned about being able to communicate with them effectively.

Due to the parents' obvious inhibitions, some regular teachers transfer the responsibility of parent/teacher conferences to the ESOL teacher. This transfer of responsibility involves another misconception—the role of the ESOL teacher. According to Donnelly, some regular teachers think of the ESOL class as a study hall and of the teacher as a monitor; regular teachers sometimes believe that the role of the ESOL teacher is to act as disciplinarian for non-native students. One day while I was in the ESOL office (used for conferences and tutoring), a regular teacher sent one LEP student to sit in the office because the student was talking during class. Rather than dealing with the discipline problem himself, the teacher unloaded the problem on the ESOL Department. Using the ESOL teacher and office as a disciplinary tool gives students a negative impression of the program.

A final misconception, related to the confusion about what ESOL teachers do, is that in order to teach English as a second language, one must be able to speak the students' native languages. I can relate to this misunderstanding because up until three years ago I believed that in order to teach an ESOL student, a teacher must be able to speak the student's language. Considering that there are as many as ninety-five different languages represented in Montgomery County's ESOL program, it is impossible for one teacher to know them all. I believe that this misconception comes in part from some regular teachers' lack of knowledge about the difference between bilingual education programs, in which students are taught or tutored partly in their first language, and ESOL ones.

According to Bill Donnelly, the attitudes of regular teachers toward ESOL students have changed for the better over the past six years. Regular teachers, he says, are becoming more willing to learn about the ESOL program and about second language students.

The Reality of Second Language Learning and Teaching

Understanding something about second language acquisition and holding reasonably positive attitudes toward non-native speakers will benefit regular teachers as well as the LEP students they encounter. Perhaps most important is a sense of how acquisition proceeds among children and adolescents who have recently arrived in a new country.

One common myth among educators and non-educators alike is the happy notion that children effortlessly and almost miraculously "pick up" second languages. As with most misconceptions and stereotypes, an underlying kernel of truth does exist. Yes, children do acquire language differently from adults, but second language acquisition is not exactly easy for them, except perhaps by comparison with the seemingly fruitless struggles of some adults.

Much has been made of the distinction between learning and acquisition (e.g., Krashen 2). Whether or not grammar consciously learned can eventually be "acquired" (used without conscious attention), it is clear that children, at least until the onset of puberty, do possess a remarkable ability to acquire language holistically, without analyzing segments as most adults are so fond of (and good at) doing. This ability, though, does not save these children from months or years of errors, communication problems, and even the kind of anxiety with which adults learning a second language are so familiar. According to Snow, preschoolers, so adept at acquiring their first language, are slower than older children and adults at acquiring a second (149). Children of elementary school age fare much better but still tend to be slower than adults, no doubt partly because it takes longer to construct a grammar holistically (as young first language learners do) than analytically (the way most older people approach a second language). Adolescents, more cognitively mature, may benefit from language analysis, but younger children benefit primarily from substantial input, plenty of time, and the freedom to make their inevitable errors; within a few years they will gain native-like ability. Children's apparent "knack" for language may actually stem from the type of exposure to language children receive and from other social differences as

well as cognitive ones; while their parents flock to adult education classes but often isolate themselves from native speakers outside the classroom, children (whether enrolled in ESL or bilingual programs or not) often enjoy greater interaction with native speakers outside of school and thus increase their acquisition opportunities. Even in optimal situations, though, children's acquisition of a second language is rarely as speedy or as smooth as we like to believe.

One of the best-kept secrets of children's second language acquisition is the not uncommon "silent period." A month before school began, an elementary teacher tutoring a 10-year-old Bosnian boy expressed concern that after two months in the US the boy was still avoiding English, pointing at the sofa rather than asking guests to sit down. This behavior might indeed seem reason for concern, especially in light of the common belief that children pick up second languages with amazing speed. Indeed, the boy's 11-year-old brother had begun speaking almost right away and, having been in the country a few months longer, was already starting to sound as well as look like a typical American kid.

The elementary teacher's concern raised several important questions. Was there something wrong with the younger boy's linguistic ability? Was the tutoring failing? How would this child survive in an American classroom, with a teacher and classmates who had never encountered LEP students before and in a system offering only minimal ESOL tutoring? The common notion that children pick up second languages easily and quickly glosses over the reality that some children, like the younger Bosnian boy and the 16-year-old son of another Bosnian couple, indulge in "silent periods" that can last several months, even after they have begun to understand much of what they hear. A teacher with a new arrival in her class may feel she has failed if she cannot engage the child in some semblance of conversation, but actually the child may be making great progress, acquiring many words before attempting to use them and developing a sense of the language's intonation before uttering a single sentence.

Knowing the boys' parents and the county's ESOL tutor, we observed the children's progress with fascination. By early fall, the boys were functioning at least adequately socially and academically, and by winter the youngest brother was well on his way to catching up to his older brother in his use of English. By spring, both were saying they often dreamed in English, even when their dreams took place in Bosnia. With the dedicated assistance of his

parents, the younger brother was earning straight As, maintaining a higher average than any other student in his fourth grade class despite having missed two years of schooling due to the war in the former Yugoslavia. To the astonishment of their parents, the boys appeared unconcerned with what their mother called "grammatic," brushing aside their parents' requests that they explain some point of syntax which had been troubling their elders. As we explained to the parents, their sons were approaching language holistically rather than analytically. This approach is less likely to cause the frustration adults feel when grappling with linguistic structures and rules, but otherwise it is not as efficient as it may seem, which may help explain Snow's findings that adults often progress faster than children in the early months of second language (L2) learning (Snow 149). In a matter of months, though, children not only catch up but speed ahead, almost always achieving greater final proficiency than adult learners.

Once children do begin speaking, whether early or late, their use of the L2 will for a long time contain many errors. For several reasons adults tend to overlook these and to see a child's acquisition as better or faster than it is. For one thing, children are not expected to engage in the kind of communicative situations that adults are. A non-native child who boldly answers the phone and says, "No, we can't go tonight 'cause we have soccer practice" may impress adults (especially his parents) immensely. But when this same child is asked to assist his parents in, say, an interview with a reporter, his linguistic (and perhaps cognitive) abilities may be strained. The older Bosnian boy, after several months in the US, was able to convey adequately the point that his mother "still has some scary parts which can't go out of her memories" (Flanagan A3). However, his translation of one of her comments ("She feels like she is on her own in a new world") upset his mother when she read it in the newspaper because she felt it did not convey the appreciation she had expressed for the help the family had received. Although this boy's progress in English has been remarkable even for a child in the "optimal" language-learning age range, he is not, even after many months, always successful in communicating meaning or in using English grammatically or exactly as a native speaker would. Although I have not seen samples of his writing, I venture to suggest that problems not salient in conversation are likely to show up in school assignments.

Silent period or no, some regular teachers feel that a child will make faster progress in the new language if the old is left behind

and so sometimes advocate mainstreaming the child into regular classes almost immediately, with little or no support from either an ESOL program or a bilingual one (Penfield 27). However, acquiring a new language as an older child or adolescent depends partly on previous linguistic experience and on the cognitive abilities developed by means of the first language (L1). Literacy skills, in particular, can eventually "transfer" from the first language to the second, so that encouraging a child to continue reading in the L1, if he or she has already developed that ability, may ultimately do more to promote proficiency in L2 reading and writing than insisting on exclusive use of the L2 (Cummins 163). Very likely the younger Bosnian boy, who kept a journal for his mother while they were separated and is reportedly much more a bookworm than his brother, will make better progress in reading and writing English precisely because of his greater experience with literacy in his native language.

Some rural school systems can offer only the most meager support to LEP students; larger systems often offer not only ESOL programs (in which the child receives a few periods of tutoring per week or an hour or two of whole-class English instruction each day) but occasionally bilingual classes or tutoring (in which some content is taught in the L1) as well. Where little ESOL support is available, there is no alternative to the "sink or swim" approach. In schools with full-fledged ESOL or bilingual programs, more students are likely to succeed; in schools offering bilingual programs, students may ultimately achieve higher literacy in English although it may seem for some time that they are not being integrated into the English-speaking school system quickly enough. While the programs for non-native speakers available in Maryland vary from nonexistent to well-developed, children with no access to any program are at a disadvantage.

Whatever the school situation, the quality and nature of the input a non-native student receives is critical. One common misconception is that, in conversing with "LEP" students, one can never simplify input too much. However, in its extreme form, "foreigner talk" is counterproductive because it provides "impoverished" (sometimes ungrammatical) input that does not promote language growth and may even stunt it. One tutor working with the Bosnian family reported continuing to speak ungrammatically for a short period of time after each tutoring session, and various teachers and other native speakers have been heard to make comments such as "He no here" in a misdirected effort to communicate with students of low English proficiency.

In developing oral conversational ability, learners of all ages need first of all "good" input, rich and grammatical. Some researchers (e.g., Krashen) go so far as to claim that adequate "comprehensible" input (that is, input that is understandable yet challenging enough to promote "stretching") is the sole ingredient of second language acquisition. Others (e.g., Long) argue that good input alone is not enough, that interaction with more proficient speakers is what genuinely promotes acquisition. Conversational interaction, while often "carried" by the native speaker, gives the learner a chance to test his or her understanding of the language and to ask—and answer—the kinds of questions necessary to ultimate conversational success. Such "meaning negotiation," far more than any overt correction or mere simplifying of input, will help a learner develop conversational competency even if grammatical accuracy lags behind.

Strategies and Recommendations

Following are some points that regular teachers with one or two LEP students in their classrooms may find helpful.

In conversing with non-native speakers of any age, conversational "breakdown" can be reduced by making reasonable adjustments to vocabulary and idiom (avoiding, for example, "Break a leg!"). Equally important is controlling the unnoticed tendency in oral conversation to start a sentence one way but then backtrack to recast sentence structure; completing an awkward sentence and then rephrasing would probably prove less confusing to the LEP listener in the long run.

Since conversational interaction is essential to acquisition, rephrasing when a student seems not to understand is more productive than merely repeating and may serve to reinforce or deepen understanding. When a student seems not to follow, the teacher can verify understanding, restating directions or summarizing comments one-on-one to clear up any questions. However, ESOL students may well understand material even if they hesitate to speak up in class or are unable to clearly paraphrase in English.

Some native speakers, especially those with no L2 experience of their own, either under- or overestimate a non-native speaker's comprehension. Some even address a native-speaker accompanying the learner rather than addressing the learner directly, suggesting that he or she knows no English at all. The other extreme is also problematic. One tutor was overheard speaking with no

modification to a newly arrived student; not surprisingly, she got no response. It is equally important not to seriously underestimate a student's proficiency. One of my Japanese students commented that he dislikes it when people obviously simplify their input to him; I trust that he is unaware of the subtle adjustments I make in conversing with him, avoiding certain idioms and structures. Given the problems with "foreigner talk" in its extreme form (that is, reducing one's own speech to the ungrammatical in order to make it "simple"), a moderate amount of conversational modification is most productive. Vocabulary and sentence structure can be greatly simplified without rendering input ungrammatical. Making appropriate adjustments is far more an art than a science, though, and communication problems are to be expected.

Since children acquiring both L1 and L2 learn by gradually and unconsciously building a grammar, direct error correction will be largely unproductive. Just as a four-year-old native speaker of English may persist in saying "us's house" for a year regardless of how many times an adult says, "No, now say 'our house,'" a non-native child will make some errors over a period of time before the correct form emerges—but emerge it will. Unlike adults, children learning an L2 in a new culture are unlikely to become "fossilized." On the other hand, indirect correction, in which the more proficient speaker models a correct structure in responding (e.g., responding to "I yesterday goed" with "Oh, you went yesterday?") is more likely to promote linguistic accuracy—eventually.

LEP students generally function better with individual attention and in small groups rather than with whole-class instruction. In addition to finding a few spare minutes to work with the child one-on-one, providing a partner or buddy gives the student someone to follow and to ask for help without interrupting the class or having to approach a variety of classmates.

What Penfield calls a "positive social climate" may well be the most important factor in preparing LEP students to interact in the classroom (33). If a non-native student is required to perform before she is ready or has class attention focused on her, she may become more hesitant to use English or to participate in class activities. A child who seems to be in a silent period does not need to be prodded and nudged to speak; eventually she will. In the meantime, providing good, grammatical input and individualized attention may be the most valuable help a teacher can offer.

Establishing a positive social climate requires more than taking care not to intimidate or ignore a student. Showing a willing-

ness to learn about the student's culture is one key. Bill Donnelly suggests that teachers can make "painless" efforts to learn about a student's culture, showing some interest in the students as individuals as well as expressing interest in their cultures by asking questions and learning how to pronounce their names. However, he says, teachers should not address these issues in front of the class as a whole so as not to further isolate or embarrass the student.

One practical means of opening up communication to an ESOL student in a non-threatening way is to use a dialogue journal in which the teacher (or even another student) carries on a written conversation on topics of interest to the learner, allowing her to initiate references to anything in school or community that she wishes to discuss. Such journals are not to be corrected or graded, as this would interfere with the objective of promoting genuine communication with a real audience. For students of very low proficiency, incorporating drawings or photographs in the journal is a beneficial option. Peyton and Reed duplicate a journal entry by a young LEP student which shows nothing but a crude drawing of the classroom with "door," "teacher," and "kids" labeled; the partner's response is short and simple, yet fully grammatical: "Are there lots of kids in your class?" (40). A somewhat more proficient LEP student writes, "Cry day 'God please give me too good english' 'please please God' I'm cry boy and dumb boy. . . .I'm sorry sorry teacher." The teacher replies in part, "No! You are not a dumb student. You are smart! Every day you learn more. I am so happy because you learn every day" (15). Such journals allow for negotiation of meaning similar to that found in oral conversation (Dolly 360), providing the kind of two-way interaction that Long and Porter find productive for both psycholinguistic and pedagogical reasons (225).

Talking with the school or district ESOL teacher(s) will, at the very least, help regular teachers understand the situation in their own school as well as the ESOL teachers' roles and backgrounds. Rather than asking ESOL teachers to "run interference," regular teachers can request advice on working with non-native students. ESOL teachers may be able to suggest strategies or materials but, as Penfield cautions, the answer to working successfully with non-native speakers in regular classrooms is not to look for magic materials, which can never in themselves solve the complex problems of LEP students, but to develop a supportive environment and modify classroom dynamics (30).

Understanding and adapting may become even more crucial as English Only legislation is introduced and perhaps adopted in some jurisdictions, possibly reducing the availability of bilingual programs and in some way affecting ESOL programs. In any case, the support of non-ESOL teachers becomes increasingly important as the number of non-native students in Maryland continues to grow. Even if some regular teachers continue to see work with non-native speakers as a "burden" (Penfield 22), any school system, whether its LEP students be many or few, should do as much as it can for those students, not just by providing an appropriate number of teachers or tutors with a background in second language acquisition but by helping regular teachers understand these students and programs so that they can help ease the students' transitions into American society.

ESOL teachers will appreciate the interest and support; they most likely will not even mind being asked, once again, how many different languages they speak.

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Making Sense of the American Experience: Bond Building in English Class

In the following three essays, high school English teachers share strategies developed as the students in their high school shifted from largely white, middle class native speakers of American English to largely non-white often impoverished speakers of myriad languages and dialects. We often forget as teachers how much we depend on the shared Eurocentric traditions of our traditional white, middle-class students to build the cultural and classroom community bonds that make it possible for students to understand us, each other, and classroom materials. Traditional materials in literature, writing and speech classes, though, can help to build the same cultural and classroom bonds for our ESL students. The authors argue that common materials and strategies are also appropriate and effective for ESL students in the United States and for students in English language programs around the world.

Lee Viccellio builds bonds in English classes using performance-based group projects and individual speech presentations. Joanne Langan teaches literature using a selection of American poems and prose as points of departure that tap common student experiences across a variety of cultures. Nancy Traubitz uses American poetry and prose, including archaic poetic language and non-standard literary language, as a basis for analysis and composition in writing classes.

The authors thank their students and colleagues at Springbrook High School and Dr. Sara Parrott at Mt. Hebron High School, in Columbia, Maryland, who encouraged them to share their experiences.

In addition to working with second language students entering regular English classes, Langan, Traubitz, and Viccellio have been recognized by the Educational Testing Service for their innovative rotation program in Advanced Placement English. They are members of the Springbrook High School English Department in Silver Spring, Maryland. The authors have presented these papers for the national gatherings of the American Studies Association in Nashville, October 1994, the Conference on English Leadership at the NCTE Annual Convention in Orlando, November 1994, and the NCTE International Conference at New York University, July 1995.

Making Sense of the American Experience: Performance-Based Group Projects and Individual Speech Presentations as Bond Builders for Speakers of English as a Second Language

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When we examine the possibilities for incorporating students of English as a second language into our regular classrooms, we find numerous options depending on our units of study and the techniques we use to present these units. Group performance projects and speech presentations can help us bridge language and cultural barriers for these students as well as integrate them into the class and make them valuable and appreciated members of the group (Heath and Mangiola 36-37).

Some of our earliest opportunities to work with students in analyzing literature and placing that literature in its cultural setting can also promote appreciation of cultural differences. The oral traditions of societies, as seen in the folk tales of different cultures, provide a body of literature that offers cultural enrichment for students while focusing class attention on group work and performance. Our second language students often have difficulty performing onstage, gesturing comfortably, using proper projection, articulation, pronunciation, and expression; but our native English speakers do as well. Thus, group research and performance of folk tales from around the world can demystify cultural barriers for students by giving them more knowledge and appreciation of many cultures while at the same time strengthening their public speaking and performance skills as they learn together and from one another.

This project lends itself to different performance possibilities depending on the needs and desires of the class and teacher. Students may perform reader's theatre presentations of the folk tales, or full scale dramatizations incorporating a narrator with speaking and performing characters, or a narrator speaking the entire story with mimed characters. The key issues are that the teacher knows the cultural backgrounds of the students who speak English as a second language and has access to a library with folk tale resources concerning those and other cultures. Just how much the teacher needs to orchestrate the makeup of the groups and their assignments depends on the nature of the classes and the students in them. For instance, the teacher may want to form groups or allow students to form their own groups. If the teacher knows the best

readers in the class, she may want to appoint several of them as group leaders or narrators. In other situations the students themselves may want to choose narrators. Contact with the librarians before the project starts is also crucial to streamline research so that students can find information quickly.

First, each student group examines books of folk tales in the library or classroom and determines which culture is of particular interest to the group and which stories will work well onstage with minimal props and sets and will be well-received by the audience. The group then summarizes the story and assigns roles to the members of the group, investigating to see if any members have access to costumes from the culture that could be used in the performance. Stories available to the groups should come from a wide variety of cultures and contain several characters, including a narrator, so that all members of the group will be able to perform. Each group then designs and sketches a simple set for the production onstage and eventually plots the stage movement of the characters on that sketch with the teacher during rehearsals.

Next, the group finds cultural information about the folk tale. Books on anthropology already pulled by the librarians for this project will enable students to identify cultural customs and beliefs they should keep in mind for their performance and hints about character and staging given in the tale itself. Students should then check their cultural sources for information about the characters, such as symbolic occupations, disguises or situations, and supernatural powers significant to the culture. They should also check to see if specific objects and events have important symbolic meanings within the culture. Then the students determine the story's moral or overall point and what it may mean to that culture. They construct a paragraph that the group's narrator will read aloud before the presentation, giving the highlights of the library research to educate and heighten the audience's understanding and appreciation of the folk tale (see Appendix for sample handouts that relate to this assignment).

As students move into rehearsal, it is helpful to see if the school's drama teacher or several advanced drama students are available to attend and help with rehearsals. Students will then be able to use this resource for improving and polishing their performances. After several rehearsals during class time, preferably in a large space such as the auditorium, cafeteria, or gymnasium, the group performances finally begin; and each student audience member evaluates the group presentations. The thrust of class critiques will set

a supportive, positive tone if students first highlight the strengths of the performances, then offer constructive suggestions.

Each student in the group should be an integral part of the performance of the tale, with the narrator actually reading the story and the other group members taking the roles of the characters. Second language students have the opportunity to become not only characters but resources for their groups and can give guidance and authenticity to the performances in terms of movement, dance, costuming, and cultural information. They also have the opportunity to hear the folk tales read aloud in standard English with smoothness and animation by strong student readers and to rehearse and learn their own lines as part of their roles in their group's folk tale performance.

Students may also work on a follow-up project of a similar nature by researching and presenting folk tales with puppets they make. Combining with an art class to design puppets based on cultural models gives an opportunity for both classes to learn from each other and to work together to create a final presentation. While art students research puppet designs from around the world and construct examples such as Indonesian shadow puppets, English or theatre classes research the tales, prepare introductions, and rehearse scripts with vocal characterizations. Then, working together, the classes practice the puppet movements to the vocal dramatizations of the tales. Once again, while learning from other students how to say their own lines in performance, second language students can be a resource for information about the puppets and for the stories to be enacted, thus building their assimilative bonds to their new culture while maintaining and enhancing bonds of understanding and respect for other students' cultures of origin.

Certainly the problems and concerns over mastery of English for speakers of English as a second language are not peculiar to our students but are even the subject of some of the greatest literature written in the English language. In fact, several incidents in Shakespeare's plays present this challenge from different angles. In *Henry IV, Part 1*, we see Mortimer and his Welsh bride's struggle over their inability to communicate in any way but through their fervent love for each other and Mortimer's desperation in trying to say good-bye to her. We also have the charming moments in *Henry V* as Kate tries to master the English names for body parts, finding herself saying, with much embarrassment, not quite what she means. Henry V himself has difficulty communicating with his

broken French, just as Kate's broken English provides humor in their amorous moments as he struggles to propose in his prosaic, unromantic soldier's style. These moments, captured in drama, present the plight of many of our students as they try to surmount their feelings of inadequacy when confronting the task of communicating in English. Yet Mortimer and his Welsh bride and Hal and his future wife have love on their side to cushion their feelings of inadequacy and a great writer who knew the story line they were destined to follow in English history.

But our students lack this historical perspective and foreknowledge of the outcomes of their own attempts at communication in a language that often has little or no connection to their *native* languages yet holds the key to their success in this culture. However, the English classroom can offer an array of opportunities for students to learn more about speaking English while affirming and validating their own cultural roots as well.

Throughout many high schools in Maryland, students in their sophomore year take a semester class in oral communication, learning speaking skills to help in planning, organizing, and delivering their thoughts. Speaking in front of the class is perhaps one of the most intimidating of activities; but students are required to present speeches several times a semester, from the easiest personal introduction to the more sophisticated informative and persuasive speeches. One of the earliest speaking experiences for students is the personal narrative. Usually students tell about some first-hand experience and what they learned from the experience. However, the personal narrative assignment also offers students an opportunity to learn more about their own family heritage and to talk about a subject other than self. Many of our students, no matter what their language background, have little opportunity for time with family to communicate with adult relatives on a daily basis. Supporting a family today often requires complex job schedules and little home life. This speech assignment, therefore, fulfills a number of different underlying goals for adult and child bonding through teaching, learning, and sharing.

The focus of the personal narrative speech becomes a presentation of a family story passed down for generations or a folk tale from the country or culture of the family. The student chooses an adult family member to interview, sets up the interview time and place, asks questions about the significance of the family name and his own name, creates a family tree, and learns a family story or folk tale from the relative (see Appendix for sample handouts

that relate to this assignment). Thus, the student learns more about his family heritage and shares important aspects of it with the class.

The assignment also instructs students in seeking help and learning from an adult family member, as well as introducing them to appropriate interview techniques. It is amazing what an array of cultures and nations is represented in these presentations; and if students have difficulty obtaining a story, they can easily do some brief library research based on their family's cultural background and find folk tales that will relate to their native cultures, even if not to their own families. Students also have clear–cut structures and samples of the interview and outline and can review the elements of story construction, including plot, character, and rising action to climactic moment and resolution. Finally, they must share their own interest in and reaction to their newly acquired knowledge of their family heritage and story or tale. This assignment ultimately sets a tone of interest in and respect for every student's family heritage and places value on the student's culture. It also provides an opportunity for students to speak in front of the class and to compare that oral form of communication with the written forms used in note taking, outlining, and composition writing associated with the speech.

The informative speech also offers exciting possibilities for students to focus their speeches and research on topics related to cultures of the world. Students once again can reach into their homes and heritage to research aspects of culture that will both inform and entertain their audiences. Oral presentations of African sculpture, Chinese brush paintings, Haitian culture, Hopi Indian dolls, American Indian totem poles, traditional Indian music, Korean festivals, *The Mahabarata*, Mayan culture, *The Ramayana*, and Vietnamese culture all present opportunities for students to learn to appreciate their own and other cultures of the world. Students can even group their presentations and coordinate their research for better audience understanding. Such projects broaden and heighten students' knowledge and appreciation of others and their heritage.

Moreover, no matter what their grade or skill level of secondary English, students can continue to pursue their enjoyment of cultural activities beyond the classroom. Taking advantage of the opportunities around them in their communities, students may visit area museums, sample cuisines, attend concerts, and view movie classics on their own or in sponsored groups and respond to

them in oral or written form for their English class. Ultimately, we want our students to learn about America, its culture, its customs, and its expectations; but we also want them to see that American culture draws from the many cultures of the world and respects and appreciates all of them.

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Appendix

Note: The following are five sample handouts that may be formatted (e.g., spaces added) for use with students.

Handout 1—MIME ACTIVITY: Introduction to Folk Tale Presentation and Performance

For this mime assignment, you and your group will choose a folk tale from one of the many cultures around the world. Look through the books provided in class and find a folk tale you and your group would like to present in narration and mime to the class. Choose a tale that interests you and that will work well onstage and be well received by an audience, especially of children.

Name of folk tale:
Culture from which it comes:

Provide a brief summary of the folk tale in the space below. Indicate what you think is the climactic part of the tale.

Make a list of your group members and the character(s) each will play:

Group Member	Character(s)

Make a list of props and costumes each group member will supply or find:

Group Member	Prop/Costume

List any names of other people you know who could furnish costumes and props:

On the back of this paper, sketch the way you picture the stage to look for the performance of your folk tale. Remember that we are limited in set pieces and furniture. If you have several locations, plan certain areas of the stage to be those locations. You may also use the main curtain and the concert curtain to separate the locations onstage.

Handout 2—MIME ACTIVITY: Research for Folk Tale Presentation and Performance

Name of folk tale:
Culture from which it comes:

For this library assignment, you and your group will find cultural information about the folk tale you have chosen to present and perform in class. Look through the books provided by the librarians to find information on the culture from which your folk tale comes. Bring those books to the table where you and your group are working. Each group member should try to contribute a book or other resource.

In the library materials you have gathered, find the culture from which your story comes and make a list of important information about that culture that should be kept in mind when reading and performing folk tales from that culture. List any customs and beliefs that are very different from the customs and beliefs we have in America today.

Now make a list of the characters in your folk tale and any information the *tale* gives you about them.

Character Cultural Information from Tale

Now try to find out cultural information about the characters and what happens to them in the story by checking the books about culture you have in your group. (For instance, the occupation of the character may be a key occupation in that culture, so the character may actually symbolize that culture. If the character is in disguise or a form different from his/her real self or changes from one form to another, the character may be a god or other supernatural being with certain powers and of great significance to the culture.)

Character Cultural Information from Library

Now make a list of objects in the tale that may have a special significance to the culture and find out what their significance is in that culture. (For instance, if the culture is a fishing community, a fish or fishing pole may be symbolic; or if a tree is important to the story, find out what the tree may mean to that culture.)

Object Cultural Information from Library

Now make a list of the important events in the story, then check to see if these events have special meaning to the culture (For instance, if a character receives a gift, try to find out what it may symbolize.)

Event Cultural Information from Library

Many folk tales seem to have a moral or overall point to the story told. Based on what you have learned about the culture and what is important to that culture, state what you think is the moral or overall point of the story.

Finally, on this sheet of paper, construct a paragraph that the narrator of your group will read aloud or say that will give the highlights of your library research to educate the audience and heighten its understanding and appreciation of the folk tale.

Handout 3—PERSONAL NARRATIVE SPEECH: An Interview with a Family Member

1. For your first step in preparing for the Personal Narrative speech you will be presenting this first quarter, you will be interviewing an adult member of your family to learn more about your family history. Read pages 101-103 in your textbook *Speech: Exploring Communication.* Write down the most important points from those pages.
2. Choose to interview an adult family member you think will know some interesting stories about your ancestors or folk stories that have been passed down through your family.
3. Since all of us have ancestors who were either native Americans or immigrants to the United States, get to know your family heritage by finding out where your family came from. You may find out about one side of your family (mother's or father's side) or both sides. Fill in the family tree provided.
4. Set up the interview by making an appointment with the adult family member. Be prompt to the interview, and make your family member feel relaxed by being cordial, listening carefully, and taking notes. Establish in your notes the family relationship of this adult family member to you (e.g., grandparent on your mother's side of the family). Fill out the chart provided to indicate the relationship of that family member to you. Also fill in any other information that family member can give you about other individuals in your family heritage.
5. To begin the interview, let the family member know what kinds of information you are interested in gathering: the family member's full name, the significance of that name in the family, the names of earlier members of your family and their relationship to you, the country or countries from which your family comes, and a family story passed down from generation to generation about a family member or a favorite folk tale passed down from generation to generation in your family. Be sure to take notes as you gather this information, including a thorough explanation of the family story or folk tale. Make sure that you write down enough about the story to know how the story builds in action to a climactic moment, then resolves itself. DO NOT tape record your interview. Your notes will be graded as well as your speech. Thank your family member for the time he or she gave to help you gather this information.

Handout 4—PERSONAL NARRATIVE SPEECH: Interview Note-taking Sheet

Set up the interview by making an appointment with the adult family member. Be prompt to the interview, and make your family member feel

relaxed by being cordial, listening carefully, and taking notes. Establish in your notes the following information:

1. The family relationship of this adult family member to you (e.g., grandparent on your mother's side of the family).
2. Fill out the chart provided to indicate the relationship of that family member to you. Also fill in below any other information that family member can give you about other individuals in your family heritage.

Write the following:

3. the family member's full name;
4. the significance of that name in the family;
5. the significance of *your* name in the family;
6. the names of earlier members of your family and their relationship;
7. the country or countries from which your family comes and any important information about that country that relates to your family;
8. a family story passed down from generation to generation about a family member or a favorite folk tale passed down from generation to generation in your family. (Make sure that you write down enough about the story to know how the story builds in action to a climactic moment, then resolves itself.)

Thank your family member for the time he or she gave to help you gather this information.

Handout 5—PERSONAL NARRATIVE SPEECH: Outline for Speech

Now organize your notes as follows so that you can outline your speech:

I. Introduction:
  A. Your family's name and the family member's full name whom you interviewed
  B. Reason you chose this family member and felt that this person would be able to tell you an important story
  C. Important information about your family heritage
    1. the significance of the family name
    2. the significance of your name in the family
    3. the names of earlier members of your family and their relationship
    4. the country or countries from which your family comes
II. Body:
  A. Family background of your family story or folk tale
  B. Importance of this story or tale to your family
  C. Retelling of the story from the beginning to the resolution
III. Conclusion:
  A. Reaction to your family heritage and the story or tale you learned
  B. Final comments concerning your interest in your family heritage

Making Sense of the American Experience: Literature as a Bond Builder for Speakers of English as a Second Language

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The school at which I teach is a large diverse American secondary school. One third of the student body is African-American, one third is Caucasian, and one third is about equally divided between Hispanic and Asian. The population is also diverse in economic background, ranging from very rich to very poor. This diversity requires that literature be taught in certain ways if one is to create a community of scholars. Hence my approach has been to teach literature both for what it shows the reader of the strange and the different, and for what it shows of our common experience as human beings. In our study of literature we build both bonds of community and bonds of respect for cultural differences.

I have been teaching for over twenty years. I have taught on both secondary and college levels. I have taught in both public and private schools and in both urban and suburban schools. I have taught at schools in affluent neighborhoods and in less-than-affluent ones. The last eight years, however, have given me the wonderful and challenging experience of working with a more culturally diverse population than ever before. Introducing the American experience through such canonical texts as the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Bernard Malamud's *The Natural* to students only recently arrived in this country has been an exciting adventure for me, and has afforded the opportunity to create ties among my multi-cultural classes while sharing the basic cultural heritage of American literature.

If I am to share this adventure with you, I will need to take you on a mental journey to my classroom. I will need you to understand the philosophical basis of what happens there before I speak of the experiences and ideas in teaching the texts mentioned.

On the bulletin strip above my chalk board is a quote from Dickinson: "There is no frigate like a book." The hard-sounding f-word catches the attention of most, some of whom can't help but inquire what a frigate is. The dictionary, of course, gives two meanings, a light sea craft propelled by sails and oars, and, later, in mid-nineteenth century, a warship. Obviously, Dickinson saw reading as an adventure and perhaps one presenting battles for the daring! Literature is an adventure, sometimes a dangerous one, one that takes us away from ourselves and what is familiar into what is exotic and unfamiliar. Paradoxically, that trip should also lead us

back unto ourselves with a deeper understanding of our persona as a result. C.S. Lewis says, "Those of us who have been true readers all our life seldom realize the enormous debt we owe to authors...In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself...Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself: and am never more myself than when I do" (*An Experiment in Criticism*, cited in Reynolds 193).

The student who comes here from another country, be it El Salvador, Korea, Nigeria, Iran, or elsewhere, already knows adventure. An American text simply presents a new and strange further exploit.

On the far wall of my classroom is plastered a profusion of posters with topics from all over the world: one on a Korean dance production, one on Afro-American writers, two on the Mexican art exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art featuring Diego Rivera and his wife Frida Kahlo, one an American Indian manuscript from about the time of Columbus, one from a Persian art exhibit at the Sackler Gallery in Washington, as well as others. The atmosphere affirms the legitimacy of other cultures in a classroom primarily devoted to American culture. American. The word reminds me of a sensitivity I must have to millions of Americans not born in, and who may or may not ever live in, the United States—that is just about the entire western hemisphere. The student who comes here from another country is better helped to access the literature of this country when there is a tacit understanding that the culture of his or her native land has validity as well.

The physical setup of a classroom can aid in the experience of literary studies as a communal activity. There is a stage in my classroom. The elevated platform allows me to have the students dramatize their readings, even when they aren't written as plays, and, by acting them out, take some ownership of them. Desks, large, clumsy, but square, allow for arrangement in groups of four, *sharing* groups, where reading moves from a solitary adventure to a joint one. Imagine the richness, in a blending of these desks, of experiences from the US, Peru, Senegal, and Thailand. One of my favorite assignments had my freshmen writing their required narrative as a family story. We learned through round robin peer evaluations of such fascinating experiences as one girl's grandmother's escape from Nazi Germany and another girl's parents meeting and marrying in China before emigrating to the United States.

Once the students of all these different cultures feel at home in the learning place, it is easier to approach the unknown, the for-

eign, in literature. Dickinson is not a bad starting point since her relatively simple diction at least appears readable and understandable to neophytes to the English language.

One way to better understand Emily Dickinson is to allow for actual visualization of images in her verse. The poet is full of references to New England's flora and fauna, to bobolinks and butterflies, to daffodils and primroses, to bees and frogs. Handouts with teacher-made illustrations aid in the students' ability to visualize, but student-made posters (researched as a special project) advertising her images work even better. The use of visuals contributes to the idea of reading as a communal experience and also provides an opportunity to teach a lesson on the nature of the poetic image. Lest this seem too puerile for high school students, I need to point out that many of these students are figuratively "just starting to crawl" as far as the study of traditional American literature is concerned. Visuals bring home the concept of imagery to all of the students. If sight is not enough, one of the local students can usually be counted on to mimic froggy's croak as well. Of course, the movement in discussion is then to the symbolic use of the image. Take #288, "I'm Nobody," for example.

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you—Nobody—Too!
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise—you know!

How dreary—to be—Somebody!
How public—like a Frog—
To tell one's name—the livelong June—
To an admiring Bog! (Johnson 133)

I'm sure that newcomers of whatever background feel like "Nobody," at least for a while. It's not difficult to relate to the feeling. Show the group a picture of that less-than-princely green amphibian with some accompanying sound effects and "Nobody" becomes a better somebody to be than "Somebody." Even Odysseus got some mileage out of being "Nobody." You can, of course, as teacher, model this out in your reading, but the more the students are involved, the more the literature becomes theirs. This poem, like so many other deceptively simple ones, "means" on many levels. After the simple experience of the work is had, some serious political discussions can ensue—on the nobodies and somebodies in society. Who are they? How important is it to be somebody? Is the need to be somebody the source of social problems? And so on.

One small problem arises with this poem and others by Emily Dickinson. An English teacher must be concerned with American conventions as to the use of capitalization. How Dickinson breaks or supersedes the rules can also be the subject of fruitful discussion. Who wants to be admired by a "Bog," anyway? And, did she stress the "miring" in "admiring" when she read it herself?

Another important aspect of teaching the poem is allowing the students to catch some of Dickinson's sense of humor. The images and the puns make it light as well as serious. Most students of whatever cultural background not only like the puns but have a sense of satisfaction when led to figure them out. This examination of humor allows for discussion of how different cultures' ideas of humor differ and what aspects of humor are universal or nearly so.

A less well-known poem, #1745, "The mob within the heart," has a good deal to say to individuals newly-frightened by the violence of cities, as well as to those well-experienced in the violence of political demonstrations.

The mob within the heart
Police cannot suppress
The riot given at the first
Is authorized as peace.

Uncertified of scene
Or signified of sound
But growing like a hurricane
In a congenial ground. (Johnson 707)

The reputation of the United States for violence is well-known. Here, it provides a metaphor for turbulence of soul. Newspaper photos can provide the visuals for the comparison. The metaphor provides a point of common ground: which of us has not had trouble marshaling our strong emotions though they are unobservable—"uncertified of scene or...sound" to others? Always the editor, I also feel the need to point out the absence of a period after "suppress" and to make something of it. Speculating about where the sentences begin and end provides not only a grammar lesson, but insights into poetic form.

Another way to make American poems accessible to people is to study them in pairs, preferably using one from another culture. At a National Council of Teachers of English meeting in Washington some years ago, poet John Ciardi insisted, "Always teach poems in pairs." This works well in comparing Dickinson to other

writers. Dickinson's preoccupation with death is something that students who have been exposed to revolution, famine, and natural disasters can easily connect with. There is a poem by the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral which deals with the same topic. Though most Americans can know it only in translation, we have a fine translation by the American poet Langston Hughes. Mistral's poem, "For Children" is a reverie about when she died. The same desire to feel that life goes on happily for those we love is mirrored in Dickinson's poem #54. An examination of the images of life and death as seen by the two women poets is valuable for locating a tone that is not so common when death is spoken of. The identification of the voice in these two poems allows for an understanding of one approach to death that can transcend time and geography. (A sharp contrast could be provided by the A.E. Housman poem, "Is My Team Ploughing?" where a dead fellow speaks from the grave to his friend who has, since his death, bedded the dead man's girl. This cynicism is in very sharp contrast to the tones in the Dickinson and Mistral poems.) Comparative studies allow the bringing in of non-canonical or multi-cultural titles, validating the written work of other than just European or American texts.

Our students from other cultures can have a part in enlightening students born in the United States about certain aspects of American poetry. (Of course, this also gives them a sense of "ownership of the material.") Take a poem like #553: "One Crucifixion is recorded—only." A student from a Christian culture is better able to understand and explain allusions to "Crucifixion," "Calvary," and "Gethsemane" than someone untrained in Christian culture. These emblems of suffering, when illuminated by classmates, can then better convey the experience of psychological trauma. What must necessarily follow is a discussion of what constitutes literary allusion as a poetic device and—more—from what ever-enlarging cultural treasure troves we draw our allusions.

Learning needs to progress from the known to the strange. Dickinson's poem #534 uses the term "cordillera." This word should strike a familiar note with students from all three Americas—North, Central, and South. If they know their geography, they know that this is a common western hemisphere topographical feature that ties them together as it runs down the backbone of all three areas. #534 "We see—Comparatively—" is about mountains and molehills, about giants and gnats. There may be a need to get out a gnat poster; I'm not sure if gnats run in all cultures. There are different kinds of giants, however; and a great discussion might be

had on various embodiments of the giant from Paul Bunyan to Goliath to whomever. All this would allow a better measure of the details of the poem. The focus on "molehills," or details, is necessary if students are to climb those poetic "mountains."

There is enough about Emily Dickinson for any school student to relate to—her love of nature, her rebellion, her internal turmoils masked by outer calm, her solitary life which can bespeak an adolescent's loneliness. One of the highlights of my long career was to watch a young man, a track star, defy convention, and, dressed in long gingham print dress and poke bonnet, portray Emily Dickinson and speak her poetry to a rapt audience of otherwise hard-core anti-intellectual high school seniors for his semester poetry project. Acting out or dramatizing poets or their poems works marvelously well connecting students to the literature.

And now to Bernard Malamud: what is interesting about Malamud is that his often very ethnic oeuvre was hardly mainstream canonical material a few decades ago.

The Natural is his apparently most "American" book. It has played well over the years to sports-loving youth in the United States. But what of now, in our increasingly pluralistic society? Is it doomed to be lost on all but the natives of the US, Cuba, and Japan? Of course, the game of baseball can be readily explained by any one of a number of native born enthusiasts. But the book also provides opportunity for a sports forum in which soccer, cricket, Irish football, polo, and any one of a dozen other games are compared and contrasted by the student experts who played or play them. The eventual goal is an examination of the universality of sports and the serious, symbolic, even mythical nature of play.

Comparative studies work here also. Another excellent sports story, Mario Vargas Llosa's "Sunday," is about high school students in Peru. In this narrative, the boys set up a dangerous winter swimming match between two rivals with the ostensible prize being a pretty girl they have been fighting over.

The Natural is not only about sports, but about gender roles. Harriet Bird is the femme fatale who with a shot nearly ends Roy Hobbs' career. Memo is the seductress, the tease, who drives Roy mad and never quite delivers. Iris is the earth mother, whose child can promise a future to Roy. Students always like to talk about sex. Sex is universal. But different cultures have different expectations of the gender roles. There is much material for fruitful

discussion here. How do gender expectations in the United States match those of immigrant cultures? How are they different? What kind of social problems can arise from these differences? What are our own private expectations of gender? Do we tend to stereotype the opposite sex in an effort to understand behavior? Students love to discuss these issues.

Malamud's novel is, after all its specificity of time and culture, mythic in dimension. It is interesting for students to work to a definition of hero using Roy as modern prototype. Students may want to contribute their knowledge of various epic or cultural heroes from days gone by as well as this modern age. How does Roy compare to other epic heroes? to Odysseus? to Sir Gawain, whose tale makes a good partner to teach in conjunction with Malamud's book? to epic heroes of India and China and Africa? And what of the female hero? Why are there apparently so few? In which cultures can we find the female epic hero? How many Joans of Arc or Woman Warriors (Kingston) are there? What students should come to is a composite or embodiment of their own values based on what they admire and do not admire in these literary heroes.

Not wishing to rely solely on my own observations, I asked one of my classes to study the book with an eye to teaching it to a student arriving from another country. I asked them to tell me what keys were necessary to unlock the story for someone not born in this country. I also asked them which elements in the story they considered most universal. The class is diverse in ethnic, economic, and religious backgrounds. Here is what they answered.

The students were first asked what a person new to our country might need to know in order to appreciate Malamud's novel. Respondents often mentioned the need to understand the Great Depression and how the game of baseball and the promise of fame contributed a sense of hope in a time of severe economic deprivation. They also suggested that a map of the world, one of the United States, and even a railroad map would give perspective on Roy and his travels. Several students mentioned the symbolism of the West and mid-West of the country and the notion of innocence, as opposed to the Eastern cities and what was considered corruption there.

With regard to baseball specifically, what was considered necessary was an understanding of the game's history, especially as it evolved into a symbol of national pride. (Ken Burns' recent long

PBS series on our national game would prove valuable.) A diagram of the playing field was also suggested as a study aid.

Student attitudes, including native students and those from immigrant families, were cynical about Americans valuing honesty. Readers of *The Natural*, students think, need to understand the tension that exists in the US between honesty as a desirable ideal and the lack of it in ordinary behavior. One student, here just a few years, said: "In America, honesty is 'spoken of'...but not done." Many thought the characters in *The Natural*, like many in the United States, are frequently motivated by their own best interests to the exclusion of honesty. My students also felt that readers of the novel should know that the cult of the American hero is intertwined with the concept of "athlete as celebrity" status.

Elements that could be stressed as universals in the novel, according to my readers, included gender roles, the forces of lust and greed, the need for love and acceptance, the desire to better one's self, and the consideration of athletics as a "job." My readers thought it universally accepted that hero roles were assigned to men while women provided "ornamentation." Women in the novel were viewed as "objects" (of lust) or "angels," as is usually depicted in literature. Human beings of any culture, they felt, could respond to Roy Hobbs' need for love and acceptance. Human beings also naturally strive to be and to have something better. Roy's need to be "the best" is something that crosses cultural barriers. Asked about the importance of play, these readers said there was a universal need to take life and work seriously—if one wanted to succeed.

Little by little the students began to see through their reading and discussion that sports provide an acting out that is metaphorical for other behaviors in life. They came to a deeper understanding of the great American pastime, and also what is in the game that reflects universal human behavior.

This is only the beginning of my great adventure in cultural diversity. I continue to find the strategies of validating a multiplicity of cultures, and the use of sensory aids, dramatization, and comparative studies helpful in building bonds in my community of scholars' classroom. Moreover, when students are helped to see those aspects of humanity that they share with their classmates, perhaps the most important learning adventure of all has been realized.

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Making Sense of the American Experience: Writing Instruction as Bond Building for Speakers of English as a Second Language

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Some of the most persuasive recent scholarship concerned with writing instruction explores and deliberately exemplifies literacy narratives, personal stories of writers becoming writers, the autobiographical journey, or rites of passage during which we acquire sufficient skill with written English to recount, explain, and finally examine our lives. Mary Soliday, in her essay "Translating Self and Difference Through Literacy Narratives," describes this process as "self-translation where writers can articulate the meanings and the consequences of their passages between language worlds" (511).

In broadly diverse classes devoted entirely to writing instruction, ESOL to Advanced Placement, Soliday's theories about literacy narratives can translate into full-time writing instruction for all skill levels. As one of the major assignments, students can be required to keep a daily journal focused solely on their experiences as writers. The topic of writing is less restrictive than it first appears when students realize they can write not only about their writing but also about their inability to write, their past experiences with writing teachers, the times when not being able to write handicapped them in comic or, more often, tragic ways. Because they are allowed to write about nothing except writing, they become more aware of their new lives as writers of American English. As their skill with written language increases, students write more

polished literacy narratives, such as examples contained in Linda Brodkey's "Writing on the Bias."

Eventually students study and imitate longer literacy narratives, such as Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory* and Carolyn Heibrun's *Writing a Woman's Life*. For a teacher of second language students, the pull to assign literacy narratives as writing exercises and to read them as literature is almost overwhelming, and reading and writing these narratives can quickly become the entire content of my course.

However, in my school system, and in many others, high school English curriculum content is frequently mandated by the school board or the central office or the community. In most high school English classes, mandated course content requires students to write some papers based on readings in traditional American literature. After years of teaching such traditional high school English classes, I have discovered it is possible to select for such mandated readings works which enable students to make written sense of the American experience. The lessons presented below use two poems, Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and the patriotic hymn, "America, the Beautiful," and two prose pieces, passages from Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God*.

Because of the widespread use and easy availability of these four works, I have not cited specific texts. For the novels I have given the standard chapter divisions to indicate the passages discussed. What makes these texts useful to second language students, despite complex language and unfamiliar content, is the intrinsic merit of the selections as great and moving literature and a clear and consistent four step assignment process. As I present each work for class study, I follow the same four steps.

First, the class must acquire enough background to make the content of the work comprehensible. Such background requires the use of maps of America—topographical, political, historical, even modern road maps—on classroom walls, from the overhead, and as handouts. Establishing historical timelines and discussing the climates take time but provide important information. I tell the class stories about the authors and "sell" the selections. Second, the class reads the piece of literature out loud. As the teacher, I read it; then students read the selection in a group recitation. Teachers who learned standard English through liturgical responsive readings know that oral imitation helps in the acquisition of

language. Students trained in English classes in other parts of the world often have experienced oral imitation and recitation classes and take pleasure in group choral reading sessions. Finally, each student reads some or all of the work under study in a class read-around. Third, the class works through the selection sentence by sentence, taking apart the sentences and identifying the sentence structure, trying to feel the rhythm of the meaning units. Fourth, the class works through the selection word by word, paying special attention to homonyms and looking for connotations and denotations.

This four step strategy works especially well with short poems. Many students attempting to master English tell me they like to write about poetry. By "poetry" they mean poetry with a pronounced, regular meter and simple, predictable rhyme. The rhyme gives clues to pronouncing unfamiliar English words, and the strong, regular rhythm provides a template upon which students structure original sentences. One of their favorite works is Robert Frost's short poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." Following the four step plan, we begin with a background study providing information about the New England climate and landscape. I try to take nothing for granted. For example, Frost, in this poem, is a name, not a weather condition. The "darkest evening of the year" is the winter solstice, in the northern hemisphere the longest period of dark of the year. The second step, reading aloud, emphasizes the following lines of the poem:

> He will not see me stopping here
> To watch his woods fill up with snow.
> My little horse must think it queer
> To stop without a farmhouse near....
> The only other sound's the sweep
> Of easy wind and downy flake.

Such rhymes as *queer/near* and sound patterns like *will/watch/woods/fill*; *only/other*; and *sound's the sweep of easy* are especially difficult. These lovely sounds lend themselves to the third step, the close analysis of meaning units, as we study the poem sentence by sentence, clause by clause, phrase by phrase. Here we prove, to the delight of the class, that the poem can be sung to the tune of "Hernando's Hideaway," a 1950s tune from the musical *Pajama Game* by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross.

After this much discussion of the poem I once assumed everyone in the class knew the meaning of individual words. Such an

assumption is never safe! Now I have learned to insist on a discussion of specific words as the last step in the analysis. In the early readings students are reluctant to admit or are not yet aware that they do not know the meaning of specific words. When I ask what words they need help with at the beginning of the analysis, some students request definitions for every single word, unwilling to trust their own nascent English, unwilling to draw upon contextual clues to meaning, entirely unwilling to construct meaning for themselves. By the time we have covered background information, read the poem aloud, and worked on the sentence structures, however, they have good questions. Even after looking up the words in the dictionary, students still need help. For example, the dictionary misleads on the word *woods*, as in "Whose woods these are." Students think perhaps the poem is set in a lumberyard or sawmill. For many of them *woods* means *planks*. They also know *downy*, as in "downy flake," is something to put in the dryer.

Through word by word analysis of the text, students approach the cultural context. Words they define from their own experience, like *village* and *farmhouse*, have different meanings in the cultural context of Frost's poem. An essential word, *miles*, may need to be translated into its kilometer equivalent. Words like *harness* and *bells*, both dutifully looked up in the dictionary, remain elusive because the cultural context is new. Some common usage escapes meaning entirely. For example, what does a new speaker of English make of an *easy* wind or a *deep* woods? Finally, some symbolism is so culturally imbedded that only long and honest discussion can make the shades of meaning begin to register. All readers, native speakers as well as second language students, can debate what it means to be "Between the woods and frozen lake," can question how the winter solstice relates to "The darkest evening of the year," and need to explore the religious and historical allusions that identify *darkest evening* and *sleep* as representations of death. On the other hand, students who do not speak English easily often seem more profoundly moved by the repetition and dictionary definition of the word *promises* than those who use English casually.

"America, the Beautiful," written by Katherine Lee Bates just over one hundred years ago, is also a wonderful poem to team teach with colleagues in social studies or music. Again, students will need a topographical map of the United States and a chronological timeline of American history. The teacher(s) can provide background as handouts or make the development of such instructional mate-

rials part of a longer study of the content of the poem. In the reading out loud step, we note the rhymes, especially the refrain. The repetition of a considerable part of the poem is especially comforting as less vocabulary has to be mastered than the length of the poem suggests at first glance. In the third step, the analysis of sentence construction, students need considerable time and help to work out sentence construction such as the direct address to an abstraction in "America, America, God shed His grace on Thee," even after they understand the meaning of *Thee* and other terminology associated with religion.

But it is the archaic vocabulary, especially the religious underpinning, that makes this poem difficult and useful. Looking up words like *God, grace, good,* and *majesty* in a contemporary dictionary starts the class discussion. After the discussion of religious terminology, the geography of the poem seems almost easy. The North American continent opens out before us, from the *purple mountains* (You call them Smokies?) across the *amber waves of grain* (Is a fruited plain one of the Great Plains?) to the other *shining sea.* Students have great fun seeing the *sea* homonym. We talk about where that *thoroughfare* actually crosses *the wilderness.* Difficult phrases like *liberating strife* and those heroes *Who more than self their country loved* make the lesson a chance to survey American history.

Archaic words hard to find in the dictionary, like *trod, 'tis, thee, thine* and *thy,* lead in some classes to a discussion of how reliable this new language is actually going to be, since it has clearly changed in the last century. Finally, we talk about poetic language: alliteration such as *liberty in law* and the synecdoche of *Pilgrim feet.* Students are willing to agree that whole Pilgrims were attached to the feet. Only a few students delight in figurative language, but they all eventually understand we are not talking about Big Foot-type tracks in the sands of American history.

Students insist they like poetry, but they are more willing to discuss the differences between figurative and literal language in prose passages. Perhaps they feel less threatened by prose on the page. Two passages from beloved American novels, separately or as an exercise in comparison and contrast, serve successfully as a basis for literary analysis essays and as models for descriptive writing. Students without enough English to read the entire novel can experience Huck Finn's life on the Mississippi in the first paragraph of Chapter 19, beginning with the sentence "Two or three days and nights went by; I reckon I might say they swum by, they

slid along so quiet and smooth and lovely." Then we turn to Zora Neale Hurston's description of a Florida hurricane in Chapter 18, beginning "Sometime that night the winds came...." and ending "They seemed to be staring at the dark, but their eyes were watching God." In these passages the distillation of American language and landscape is accessible to students brought up on the Mekong or the Yangtze or the Amazon or the Congo. Until I taught these passages to second language students, I was inclined to gush, maybe get a little breathless about the elegance, the mood, the texture of the language. While that beauty of language and landscape is important to second language students, we also consider other equally wonderful characteristics of these passages.

The same four steps used with poetry work with prose passages. Consistency and predictability help students at all levels of language acquisition. A dictionary and an atlas help, but won't do the whole job in prose any more than in poetry. For a variety of writing assignments such as a description of a place, a précis, or a summary of content, leading the class discussion and analysis through these four steps may be all that time allows or the assignment requires.

But in a writing class, students have the right to question what we mean by "correct English" and why it is such a difficult concept. As students work with these texts, they may broach these issues; and we as teachers have the responsibility to consider with them the thorny questions raised by dialects and regionalisms. In such classes I ask students to select a short passage of a sentence or two and translate that selection into standard, formal written American English. Then, with the help of their grammar books, we examine every change they make or do not make in the original text. Students work in teams of two or three. A translation of the first sentence from the *Huckleberry Finn* passage quoted above might read: "Two or three days and nights went by; I THINK I might say they SWAM by, they slid by so quietLY and smoothLY and lovely." The capitalized letters represent changes to standard usage. Although the changes are relatively few in this passage, they involve verb constructions second language students struggle to master. Recognizing and explaining the shift to standard verb and adverb forms is worth the class time. Working with dialogue is even more difficult. The first section of dialogue in the Hurston passage reads in the original "Ah'm glad y'all stop dat crap-shootin'even if it wasn't for money," Janie said. "Ole Massa is doin' *His* work now. Us oughta keep quiet." Translated into formal English, the passage

becomes "I AM glad YOU stopPED THAT crap-shootinG even if it WEREN'T for money," Janie said. "OLD MASTER is doinG *His* work now. WE OUGHT TO keep quiet." Students, even those with very limited language skills, will make some of these changes. More importantly they will also notice that something significant gets lost in the translation.

Tinkering with the language of the canon is risky. "Correcting" the language of such writers as Twain and Hurston requires time and the opportunity to discuss fully translations presented by the students. For students who have fallen in love with the wonderful language of Twain and Hurston, such an exercise risks diminishing their respect for "correct" English. "After all," the student may insist, "if Twain did it, why can't I do it?" For students struggling with the whole concept of "correct" English, the exercise risks diminishing the value of the text because the language is "wrong." Yet, as treacherous as this exercise is, it raises honest questions that students have, whether they voice them or not.

Finally, although they have identified non-standard usage and been able to substitute standard forms, students may not know what the passage means. After students have translated their passages into standard, formal English and discussed the complexities and ambiguities raised by the translation exercise, I ask them to enlarge their translations to clarify all the meaning of the passage. Having explored the differences between "correct" and "wrong" language, we now explore the differences between literal and figurative language. Can "days and nights swim by"? Who is Janie's "Old Master" and what is his "work"? To compose in standard, formal written American English is a major goal of a high school writing class. Getting these passages into literal standard, formal, written American English is a game played with language, giving students a changed understanding of what writers do with language and a genuine delight in the writer's original text.

Colleagues occasionally question why I subject second language students to poetry, let alone non-standard dialectal English. The questioning usually goes something like "Isn't it difficult enough for them to learn English at all? Why confuse them with hard stuff? Why take up class time with English that's incorrect?" My answer to their questions is that all students have the right to instruction that does not dodge difficult issues raised by our living, changing language. Real instruction for real writing insists on our individual and distinct selves and at the same time looks for and values the universal, the human condition that both embraces

and reaches beyond local climate, geography, culture, and language. Honest instruction takes risks to build the bonds that bind together our individual selves as members of a great nation. We do not seek homogenized sameness; we do not want to be all alike. Writing instruction strives to recognize, value, and—through the actual writings crafted by the students—validate our essential humanness.

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MCTELA: A Professional Organization for Educators Interested in English/Language Arts

The Maryland Council of Teachers of English Language Arts (MCTELA) was founded in the late 1950s. Originally geared to English instruction, it expanded in the 1970s to include all language arts teachers. Business meetings and conferences used to take place at the same annual meeting, but the organization has grown to include monthly Executive Board meetings and semi-annual conferences. Activities include publication of the ***Maryland English Journal***, quarterly newsletters, Teacher of the Year selections, "Showcase" writing competitions for elementary students, and representation as an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.

The purposes of the Council are to improve the quality of instruction in English/Language Arts at all educational levels, pre-kindergarten through university; to encourage research, experimentation, and investigation in the teaching of English; to sponsor publications of interest to English/Language Arts teachers; to represent the interests of English/Language Arts before the public; and to integrate the efforts of all those who are concerned with English/Language Arts instruction.

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"Where Is Your ID?": The Literacy Narrative of a Bilingual, Bicultural Student at an Urban University

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"Where Is Your ID?" highlights the "fears, tensions, and anger" experienced by a forty-five year old Hispanic woman who failed her university's English proficiency essay exam six times. Attempting to improve her writing skills, she took all of the English as a Second Language and basic writing classes available—only to be told by her last teacher that she should "start all over again." Yet she has met all of the other requirements for finishing her Spanish degree and entering the graduate foreign language program. Moreover, her life history reveals an extraordinary level of involvement in literacy work—participating in Central American literacy campaigns, tutoring GED applicants, counseling Hispanic prisoners on parole, teaching bilingual students in public schools. What kind of educational system labels this student a failure? The author suggests that writing theory and pedagogy should help to construct a different system—one that recognizes students' diverse composing processes, complex rhetorical strategies, and culturally-based understanding of writing's power.

This essay presents a case study in the form of a narrative—a life story which reveals the political as well as the pragmatic character of bilingual, bicultural literacy. Following the ideological model of literacy development proposed by Brian Street's *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Allan Luke's *Literacy, Textbooks, and Ideology*, Catherine Walsh's *Literacy as Praxis*, and other research, I suggest that definitions of literacy in higher education reinforce economic, social, and cultural divisions between groups whose language abilities are valued and others whose skills are considered problematic. At colleges and universities nationwide, definitions of literacy determine where students are placed in writing programs, how they are evaluated by their teachers, and whether or not they are judged proficient in the writing skills required for graduation. For example, at my university, forty-seven percent of Hispanic students are placed in the basic writing program; their course grades tend to be low; and their failure rate tends to be high on the English proficiency essay exam required for graduation. In

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writing about one such student, I question the predictability of this kind of failure. For the benefit of all students, I believe that we should recognize students' diverse composing processes, complex rhetorical strategies, and culturally-based understanding of writing's power.

****

Here I would like to tell you a story—the story of a bilingual, bicultural student who offers painful lessons about the violent nature of literacy instruction and evaluation in our schools. Much of this story will be told in the words of the student herself, here named Maria Fernandez. My knowledge of Maria's life is based on a friendship that started three years ago, when she was my student in a basic writing class at my university. Since then we have been meeting on a regular basis to discuss her progress in school; my narrative is drawn from over thirty hours of interviews and conversations with her. I imagine that Maria's story will seem familiar to many of you. But that familiarity is exactly what I want to question. Are the problems of bilingual students in the 1990s exactly the same as in the 1970s and 1980s? Or do economic and political realities now challenge us to reconsider our responsibilities to those students?

When I first met Maria, she was forty-five years old, married and the mother of two teenagers, a full-time city employee, and a volunteer in several Hispanic community organizations. She was looking forward to graduating soon with a bachelor's degree in Spanish literature; in fact, she already had been conditionally accepted by the master's program in foreign languages. At that time, she had only one major degree requirement left: passing the English proficiency essay exam, a ninety-minute impromptu exam testing the logic, clarity, and correctness of students' writing. Although she already had failed the exam three times, she was determined to try again. "If I can do this," she told me, "I can become a Spanish teacher and really make a difference in the world." But after failing a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth time, Maria began to doubt herself. "Is it possible," she asked me, "that I really am a failure? Is it true that I really do not have even the minimum skills to prove to this university that I can think for myself, communicate with other people, and work with them to do some good in the world?"

I would like to address Maria's questions because they are important questions for many students who are underprepared to meet the demands of higher education. In my view, their failure has become institutionalized—even predictable—largely because

of literacy standards which have been very narrowly conceived. For example, in order to pass the English proficiency essay exam, bilingual students like Maria must demonstrate their ability to plan, revise, and edit a text which will show no obvious signs of their native language skills. If the text displays their control of standard English, then they will pass. But if the students' language seems out of control—if it departs from the monologic, monocultural norm we have set, then they will fail. Moreover, this happens throughout our system of higher education. As Mary Trachsel explains, our standards of instruction and evaluation tend to emphasize "mastery of certain textual forms a writer may choose for translating thought into language" (1). In this "translation" process, writing can only represent reality, not transform it. In effect, we educate students so that their representations will match our own. Consequently, as Kurt Spellmeyer observes, "We continue to act as though our students see the world just as we do, and merely [describe] it less correctly, with less accuracy and attentiveness" (6). Students like Maria, however, have taught me how wrong we are not to see the world through their eyes.

In Maria's life, literacy development and self-development are very closely related; she reads and writes in order to explore and enlarge her own possibilities in the world. At the same time, Maria's language abilities enable her to achieve specific social goals, as shown by an excerpt from one of her earliest conversations with me:

> Growing up in Mexico, I thought school could never be for me. School was for boys who could support their families. But I always was very curious about the world...So I made my parents send me to high school and college, and I made them proud...When I was a senior, I volunteered to work in Guatemala as a literacy teacher. I liked it so much, I worked six years there and in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Living conditions were poor, I had very little money, sometimes I was in danger, I missed my family, but I never thought to leave. Let me tell you about one day I don't want to forget.
>
> "Where is your ID?" The soldier was not going to let me pass. I was walking to a village in El Salvador and the road was blocked. This happened many times, so I was not afraid. But I was angry. If he turned me away, people in the village would think I ran away. I was teaching the adults and children to read and write. They wanted to ask the government for money to build a school. They were too poor to have books, so we were making

our own books...In the books, we wrote about their families and their village and the country. Does that sound dangerous? Some people thought it was. But we kept making our books...The soldier pushed me back. He stood his gun between us..."Where is your ID?" I took out my government pass. He stared at it and stared at me. He let me pass...the people were waiting...

When I went back to Mexico, I was different...I was glad to be home, but I missed the people in the other places. Now my country was Mexico and the other places: Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica. Does that seem strange? I got a full-time job, a good-paying job with American Express in Mexico City. When they said I could go across the border to school, to improve my English, I was happy to go. But that happiness did not last. "Where is your ID?" said the border guard. "Where is your ID?" said the man when I tried to rent an apartment. "Where is your ID?" said the teachers. I was not afraid of any of these people. They could not do anything to me. I had the right to go to school. But I was angry, and soon I went back to Mexico...

Something changed my life, though: I married a man from my hometown. He went across the border to work; then he wanted me to go across and stay there with him. So I did. At forty years old, I started school again. A new country, a new culture...Now I had to learn English to survive...

Maria learned enough English not only to survive, but to help many others in the Hispanic community through her excellent bilingual skills. She tutored adults trying to earn general equivalency diplomas, volunteered as a teacher's aide in public schools, and worked full-time as a parole officer for Hispanic prisoners at the city jail. After completing a non-credit English as a Second Language program at a community college, she enrolled at the university and finished five composition courses—including three in ESL and two in basic writing. However, all of these accomplishments were called into question when Maria enrolled in English 101. Her advisor had told her that she needed the class to improve her writing skills enough to pass the proficiency exam. Instead, her skills were so seriously undermined that she withdrew from school. How could this happen?

If you consider Maria's rough draft—and her teacher's response to it—you can see what went wrong. As you can tell by the many

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editing marks, Maria had a very hard time using the computer, so she typically edited her writing by hand. Except for the circled notations made by the teacher, all of the marks that you see are Maria's. I know this kind of writing-in-progress will look familiar to many of you. Often during teacher-training, we use this kind of writing to suggest useful ways of helping students to revise. But here I would like to go beyond pedagogy to the politics of evaluation.

Your Identification

Your name? Clara. Nationality? Nigaraguense. Are you sure? Yes. Your age? 22 years old. Wait here. Why? Because I said so.

About 30 people were standing in line, among them was Clara. An extremely beautiful, and stender gril with big clear brown eyes and long blond hair. She seemed to have more of an angels face than a human face, and a sweet and peaceful appearence. Great thougths seemed to be crossing her mind, she looked lost in deep thoughts as if she were in anothe world. I looked at her many times. What was so special about her ? Well one of the things that impress me the most was that while evreybne in that room was so worried, afraied of what could happen to us, Clara conserved her same attitude, peaceful and sweet. Just like if she didn't care about others. I also remember that that day she was wearing blue jeans with a white sweater, black sandals and a black ribbon in her long blond hair.

After a few minutes, the soldier finished interviewing the people. Then he picked up the passports and made his way to Clara who was only standing a few steps ahead of me. The soldier asked her to follo him, but she refused to do so. The soldier called her name again with a stronger voice and said "Follo me." I was very surprised that Clara didn't move from the spot where she was standing. Everybody looked at each other with confusion, and wondering why Clara didn't follow the soldier's orders. I knew or expected that if she didn't go , she would be punished. I was so worried about what might happn to her, and for that reason I couldn't say anything to her. However, she didn't even seem to care what the soldier said. For a minute

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I thought that she was possessed by the Holy or the evil spirit, because she was the only person in that room who behaved differently. (interesting)

A few minutes later, two ~~short and~~ tiny boys came into the long corridor where we were waiting. Both of them approached Clara, without ~~have~~ having been seen by the soldier who was distracted counting the passports. One of the boys gave a blanket to Clara, and the other one ran to the exit door. I noticed that Clara was waiting for those boys, because nothing surprised her. Besides, the three of them made a quick and safe move. ~~For example,~~ Clara disappeared from the line she was standing, and ~~lay~~ laid on the floor immediately behind ~~the~~ an old desk. On the other ~~hand~~ side, the two boys shot grenades into the room where the other soldiers were. While Clara started to ~~shot~~ fire at the same office with a big pistol that she got from the blanket that was passed to her by one of the boys. Then one of the boys ordered us to get out and run to the church which was across the street and then lock the door.

Minutes later, the whole police station was engulfed in red flames and black smoke. After all these things had happened, I couldn't forget Clara's face. She impressed me in certain way that I still seeing her anywhere. For example, if I go to the store, to the park and even to church, as soon as I see a person wearing jeans and a white sweater, with long and blond hair, my whole mind returns to Nicaragua to the place where this event happened long time ago.

One month later, I discoverd that Clara's real name was Wanda.

(Clara) Wanda was the only child to survive the fire which destroyed her parents house. Their house was set on fire by one of the soldiers at the station we had watched burn down. Clara set the station on fire to revenge the death of her family.

Clara lost her family at the age of 8. The priest form her family's church took care of her. So, he placed Clara in a home that ~~with who~~ belonged to the Ketchuas Tribe in Guatemala. For 14 years, Clara had lived with that tribe, where she learned how to survive in the cities, the fields and anywhere. The Ketchuas taught her how to be strong and make decisions in her life. The Ketchuas believe in their spirits more

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than in their own bodies. They are not afraid of ~~noone~~ anyone in this world. Therefore, they said that men can kill their bodies but never thier soulds.

Fourteen
14 years later, Clara decided to take the law in her own hands and make justice. When I was informed about the things that Clara went through, I understood why Clara was not a regular person. Clara didn't belong to the world we lived in, she belonged to the Ketchuas world.

this is excellent

On the first page, Maria describes a woman that she meets at a border crossing when they are waiting at a police station to have their passports checked. Maria is fascinated by the woman, called Clara, because she remains strangely calm in a chaotic situation. Even when a soldier orders Clara to follow him, she remains unafraid and unintimidated. On the second page, we learn why. She is there to set the police station on fire. Two boys come in, pass a gun to Clara, and throw grenades at the main office. Clara takes aim at the same office, and everyone else runs outside. As Maria tells us on the second page, "Minutes later, the whole police station was engulfed in red flames and black smoke. After all these things had happened, I couldn't forget Clara's face. She impressed me in [a] certain way that I [am] still seeing her anywhere. For example, if I go to the store, to the park and even to church, as soon as I see a person wearing jeans and a white sweater, with long, blond hair, my whole mind returns to Nicaragua to the place where this event happened a long time ago." In the final paragraphs, we learn that Clara acted to avenge the death of her own family at the hands of the military.

Now consider the kinds of comments Maria received on this rough draft (those I have circled). The teacher marks seven spelling errors, a comma splice, a missing comma, and two inaccurate words. Her only marginal comment is to "maintain consistent tense." Next, she crosses out a preposition, a comma, and a phrase, and writes a one-word comment, "interesting." The end is not marked at all except for a deleted comma, an added apostrophe, and the marginal note "this is excellent" toward the bottom. We are wrong if we think this teacher simply needs to be more facilitative or explicit in her comments, although that is what teacher-training often emphasizes. In my view, this teacher has yet to imagine—to fully believe—that Maria actually belongs at the university. The realities of Maria's experience might seem foreign to us. Her attempts to communicate them might not meet our standards of clarity and correctness. But students like Maria challenge us to

rethink our own roles as the border guards of higher education. Here again I will let Maria speak for herself. This is what she told me about English 101:

> I think this teacher did not want me in the class at all. On the first day, she announced, "I am not an ESL teacher." Then after we wrote the first in-class essay, she said, "Some of you are not writing in an American style. You should drop the class and take it again after you get more practice in using an American style." She looked right at me and the other two women who spoke Spanish. They both dropped, but I didn't. What is this American style? Where will I find it? Who is going to teach it to me? I think teachers only want students who already know what it is, who don't need the explanations. Look at how she writes on my paper. She says, "This is excellent. This is so good!" She says my paper has "An interesting angle with excellent details."' But these words are meaningless. She gives me a D- and says, "The grade reflects more the errors than your content." What content? I don't think she sees any content, any ideas, any thinking. She sees nothing but errors—many more errors than she points out or explains. What does she mean when she says we must work on "the language problems"? I think she is the one who has language problems. She doesn't know how to tell me what she wants or why. She makes me feel stupid, blind. How can I talk to her when she already has decided that I will fail?

Although we might like to think that Maria's experience in 101 was unusual, research suggests otherwise. For example, in *Appropriating Literacy*, Rodby reports her analysis of teachers' reading practices at a number of community colleges and universities. She consistently found that teachers of non-native students turn reading into correcting. As they edit line by line, they try to make the students' writing conform to a preconceived model of what Maria's teacher called the "American style." As Rodby observes, "Although it may have become naturalized . . . this is a very strange way to read. . . [Teachers are trained] not to see, hear, and know what is there, but rather to perceive what isn't there" (117). Consequently, students' authority and intentions also are displaced, moved off the page to make room for discussion of their errors. In effect, this leaves many students voiceless, powerless to resist their teachers' judgments of what is or is not acceptable academic writing.

For Maria's second essay in 101, she decided to address a more conventional subject, the social life of non-native students on cam-

pus. Again, however, she felt traumatized by her teacher's inability—or refusal—to respond to her ideas. When Maria wrote about the "suffering, loneliness, and hopelessness" experienced by foreign students, the teacher underlined her spelling errors. When Maria wrote that her ideas were being ignored because of her language limitations, the teacher commented, "I don't know what you mean." The accuracy of that remark cuts to the bone.

In her class journal, Maria described the frightening disintegration of her language skills. In her words, "To write in English is just like a nightmare. My mind gets involve[d] with so many things at the same time that it is almost impossible for me to clear and organize my thoughts. As soon as I start writing in English, the tension about spelling, grammar errors and trying to think in English turn[s] my mind upside down. As a result, I almost never get the kind of writing I want." Maria dropped the class when she received an F on the journal. Shortly after that, she received official word that she had failed the English proficiency essay exam for the sixth time. Then she turned her anger into action.

She met with two other women—one Hispanic and one African American—who were organizing a student protest against the proficiency exam. She collected stories of women like herself who had completed their degree requirements except for the exam, who had dropped out of school because they could not master standard English. These women were student counselors, teachers' aides, and school-home liaison workers for the public schools—paraprofessionals paid minimum wages for their bilingual skills. As Maria told me, "Unless they get their degrees, they will never get better jobs. They are angry, but they also are ashamed. Failing in school has made them ashamed. English has made them ashamed." Maria tried to meet with the chancellor and the humanities dean at the university, but they would not see her. Finally she wrote an open letter to them, the directors of student advising, and the head of the undergraduate composition program. Here I would like to quote part of that letter:

> I don't have the strength to trust my writing abilities anymore. My self esteem is very low because of the humiliations...The reason I have continued studying at this university is because I have dignity. I know who I am and what I want. I am a mother, student and worker. I have completed one hundred and twenty credits and I know that I am much wiser than when I started...

When Maria says she is much wiser now, I hear a bitter irony in her voice, for she has come to understand her place in a system of

failure. In "Double Jeopardy: Women of Color in Higher Education," Deborah Carter and her colleagues report that Hispanic women "remain one of the poorest, least-educated populations in this country" (100). Although women make up 52% of Hispanic enrollments in colleges and universities, national statistics on Hispanic students are bleak. Only 22% of high school graduates go on to college; and of those, only 7% ever complete their degrees. At my university, the Office of Minority Affairs recently reported that the overall graduation rate for students of color is only 12%—compared to 37% for other students (Salsini).

What has gone wrong with us and our schools? I want to ask that question—rather than "What has gone wrong with our students?"—because I am convinced that we need to change our own attitudes and approaches in working with multicultural populations. As Judith Rodby notes, "Americans fear the foreign" (xi)—and I think our literacy standards reflect that fear. We want students' writing to conform as exactly as possible to our ways of seeing and representing the world. Our reading practices suppress their differences from us. More often than we might like to admit, instruction and evaluation reinforce our own knowledge, power, and authority. Thus we maintain our distance from students who might otherwise threaten our security. Here is Maria's description, for example, of her last experience in taking the proficiency exam:

> As I walked up to the registration desk, the man stared at me. "Where is your ID?" He looked closely—very closely—at the picture and at me. I know he thought I might be trying to take the exam for someone else. Foreign students get questioned about that all the time. But I passed his inspection. I was not afraid of him. Only the exam made me afraid.

Maria is now in school again, retaking English 101 with a different teacher. The university has instituted a new policy that students cannot take the proficiency exam unless they earn a high score on a placement test of grammar and usage skills. Students like Maria, who already have failed several times, cannot try again. Instead they must earn a grade of C or better in a new course—titled College Writing and Critical Thinking—in order to graduate. To get into that course, Maria must pass 101—and so her struggles with English continue.

We need to remember that standards of literacy are never politically neutral. They reinforce economic, social, and cultural divisions between groups whose language abilities are valued and

others whose skills are considered problematic. It is not enough to open the doors of higher education for students like Maria. As Mike Rose suggests in *Lives on the Boundary*, we need to develop a much deeper understanding of students' "differences and problems—and possibilities" (128). And so I would like to conclude with Maria's comments at our last conference:

> Fear, tension, anger, humiliation, frustration, embarrassment, shame...these make my education painful sometimes. But I have my self-respect. I have my own goals. My dignity. My intelligence. My knowledge of what I can do and what I have achieved...But I will remain silent and invisible if you are not ready to listen. And sometimes I am afraid no one will listen.

Author's Note

Maria agrees my narrative of her experience is accurate. It is based on a combination of sources, including transcriptions of interviews; notes on conversations; and materials given to me by Maria, such as journal entries and letters. (Some details of the narrative have been changed to protect Maria's privacy.) Typically, we meet to talk in my office; I tape-record or take notes on our conversation; and then, at our next meeting, I summarize what we have discussed before we go on to new topics. In that way, she can correct, clarify, or add to my notes.

Editor's Note

As we go to press, the author reports that Maria still has not been able to complete her degree.

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This showcase features the writing of young people from grades three through seven. The writing was submitted by teachers as follows. **Anne Arundel County:** Magothy River Middle School—Bonnie Howe, Deirdre McCreary, and Karen Owen; **Montgomery County:** Cold Spring Elementary School—Terry Testa and Nancy Van Grack; **Queen Anne's County:** Sudlersville Middle School—Mary-Beth Goll.

The Magical Doo

I am the Magical Dog—
My eyes are gold nuggets,
My fur is made of soft velvet,
My teeth are made of razor sharp diamonds,
My feet, shining silver,
My tail is flexible bricks.
I live in the clouds;
I eat the rays of sun, and shafts of moonlight, and glittering stars.
My friends are cats with wings;
I do not fear anything;
I pad lightning-fast across the land;
My howl sounds like pure fear;
I run freely all day long,
And at night I sleep peacefully;
I dream I'm the king of animals.
For vacation I go to the moon and howl all night,
For I'm the Magical Dog.

—Benjamin Gordon, Grade 3

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I Am...

I am the wind that whistles through the night
And the horses that run through the meadows;
I am the daughter of the trees, the flowers and the birds;
I am the dolphin that swims through the deepest seas;
I am the sounds of voices singing;
I am a group of birds flying south;
I am all the colors mixed together;
I am the taste of hot chocolate on a snowy day;
I am the sunflowers whistling in the meadows;
I am the cats that purr all night long;
I am the whole world.

—Beth Rosenberg, Grade 3

Yellow Is the Sun

Yellow is the sun;
It is a circle shape;
It whispers to the glittering stars;
It sounds soft and whispers all the time;
It sizzles very often.
Yellow smells like the ocean, the stars, especially the sun.
Yellow's brother is orange—
They're the lightest colors in the crayon box.
Yellow feels warm, like the sun;
It feels like a furry tennis ball,
Like a sandbox with water, bittery sweet;
It's like a rainbow shining, like glittering lights on the streets
Or when you play tennis on a stormy night.
Yellow is like the lightning, the wind, the friends of green and red
and the brother of orange.
The mother is white, the father is black.
Yellow dresses nicely!

—Anna Fish, Grade 3

What Your Hands Do At Night

At night, when you're asleep, so you can't peek,
Your hands get up and move about, just to make sure you're asleep;
Then they race to your door, but your left trips over a baseball.
They separate and have different lives,
All while you're asleep.

Left stays and watches the end of a late Braves game,
While your right crawls to your mom's room.
Your left hand climbs up your dresser and turns on your Sega;
Right dives into your mom's wrinkle cream.
The right goes down to play some piano,
While left gets your brother's guitar.
Then, while your right hand steals your dad's golf clubs,
Left is taking your bat.
Then they both get a midnight snack and watch old movies until they're tired.
Then they plug the bathroom sink and sail on a Lego boat—
Left tries to push right off,
But right holds on and they both fall in with a splash;
So they dry off and creep back into your room and under your covers,
But left has to turn on the radio.
At about four o'clock, they start to plot tomorrow night's masquerade.

—Shannon Randall, Grade 6

Snow

Soft, cold, fluff of the times;
Quiet, huffing, huffing of breath;
Crisp, cold air, blown into small clouds that seem to freeze in front of me;
Fresh scent of snow to tease and annoy;
Glinting, blinding with nature's silver is the snow
Listen to the quiet huffing, huffing of breath.

—Ben Saltzman, Grade 7

Essence

I stand in a place that was,
A place of hatred, of agony.
Left behind, the essence of love,
Not known, not seen;
Hot tears and cold breath, shared
During a time of need,
A time of hatred, of agony;
I stand in a place that was.

—Ben Saltzman, Grade 7

Ice

The blackened gray
Of the irritating cold
    Which burns to the touch
But soothes to the pain

It is a killer of its own
    Of unpredictable terror
You can not escape
    IT GOT YOU
The invisible demons of the
    Ravishing cold
        ICE

—Will Tobin, Grade 7

I Love Wildlife

I love the sound of an eagle soaring
  through the sky;
I love the raccoons,
And how the trees shake,
And the wind fighting its way
   through the branches and leaves
     of a tree;
I love the way deer jump
  into the sky,
The wonderful life of nature.
I love how the foxes run
   and how the wolves hunt
     and how the chipmunks run
       their little toes across the leaves;
I love the way the jaguar's eyes glow
And the way the cheetah runs
  and the panther leaps into the sky,
And the way the bear roars
  through the mountains—
I just love nature!

—Carter Hirtle, Grade 3

Creative Collection

I have a collection deep in space on a planet named Planet X;
I have beams of metal, wooden boards, and thick glass;
I have lots of rockets, and I have big wings to make a spaceship
and fly away to a new galaxy
With a planet of paradise where there are clear lagoons
and birds as big as houses,
And the sun shines bright yellow.

—Brad Gee, Grade 3

Neon Pink Is . . .

As light as a midnight star,
Hotter than the hottest volcano,
It can outrun a group of cheetahs;
It could swim in a giant hot tub faster than eagles can fly;
It is the fire of fire;
It looks like a speck of light from the morning sun in the middle
of July.
Pink is the mother of Neon Pink
And Violet is the father of Neon Pink;
It is like a whisper in the evening when the sun is going down;
In the night, Neon Pink turns into the moon.

—Kevin Matta, Grade 3

Black

Black is the hair band I wear on my wrist;
Black is my favorite opposite;
Black is the sky that comes out at night;
Black is bold, strong as a master,
So soft you can reach straight through;
It's soft and lumpy as a bedspread;
It talks so low, the earth vibrates;
It takes out its courage when something goes wrong;
Black is me, and black is strong.

—Britta Harrison, Grade 3

From My Heart

I will never feel hurt as long as I can run to my room;
I will never feel angry, as long as I can see all the trees;
I will never be confused as long as I can sit by my stream;
I will never feel unhappy as long as my puppy sits with me;
I will never feel like a failure, as long as I have poetry;
I will never feel trapped as long as I can see all the birds flying free;
I will never feel sad for I have the rolling ocean as my guide;
As long as I can sit in my forest filled with flowers and trees,
I will never feel lonely;
I will never feel frustrated as long as I can hear the sweet song
from my music boxes;
I will never feel embarrassed as long as I keep in my heart
I am who I am, and I'm only human.

—Meagan Smith, Grade 6

Pound

Pound, Pound, Pound,
Like the heartbeat of a man
Heard across the land
Pound, Pound, Pound

You see the clock
The red like a river of blood
Rushing, rushing you

The pressure is like an inferno
10 x hot
Rivers of perspiration running down your back
The weight of man's fate on your shoulders
You take a step back
In your heart, echoes of
Go, Go, Go
In your mind, echoes of
Stop, Stop, Stop

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 — Liftoff
The shuttle is launched
high and arched
Off to its destination
Destination Championship

—Felecia Commodore, Grade 7

Ants

Red, hot ants
Fearless soldiers
A celebration of victory
Marching quietly across the picnic table
Vanishing far under the ground

—Tiera Brown, Grade 6

Hawk

"Keering" hawk
A stealth hang glider
Celebration of a hurricane of feathers
High dives from great heights for prey
Hooking its talons into victim's flesh
Holding its majestic head high above others

—Todd Basile, Grade 6

Baby

Excited with joy
A sun bursting with light
A celebration of screams
In a crib
Waiting
To get out

—James Hogen, Grade 6

Me

I am a big red tomato getting ready to burst, when I am mad!
I am stretchy and strong in my legs, because I can do the splits both ways;
When I am forgotten, I feel like a blueberry not picked;
I am a strong as a hammer, because sometimes I can be very powerful;
I am a brass flute in the downtown orchestra;
I am as tough as a watermelon but as squishy as a blueberry;
I am a star on Broadway, but as shy as a butterfly.

—Allison Keyser, Grade 3

Button

Small, unnoticed, a treasure to some,
Thousands of colors, all wrapped up in one;
A connector, a holder with little holes,
A mystery character, never figured out,
A valuable thing to produce something pretty to wear,
Rolling along in a world full of fabric and lace,
A smooth, silky feel, but hard outer covering,
Like a screw, attaching things for everyday life.

—Jamie Woodward, Grade 6

Anxiety

The sun,
peeking over the horizon,
peering into the vast world beyond,
wondering if this is the place for him,
feeling the anxiety of the vast world beyond,
procrastinates his arrival.
Slowly,
he peeks over the endless stretch of land and realizes his place;
he pops out into the sky,
confronting the dark face of anxiety and soon rises above it,
to enlighten the world below.

—Lindsay Morris, Grade 6

Jungle Green Is...

A tangling color;
It seems like a fresh color to me;
Jungle Green is an exciting color that really stands out;
To me, Jungle Green is leaves on a beautiful tree;
Jungle Green is a very dark, pretty, sparkling ocean;
To me, Jungle Green tastes minty;
Jungle Green makes me feel fresh inside;
To me, Jungle Green is a dark alligator that is eating plants;
To me, Jungle Green is a rectangular shape;
To me, Jungle Green is a dragon that is breathing a dark red out of its mouth.

—Adam Gotts, Grade 3

I Am...

I am a screwdriver, because I love to twist things around;
I am a puzzle piece that just doesn't fit;
I am a cricket, because I'm small, thin and noisy;
I am a typewriter, because I love to jump around;
Sometimes I'm a tennis racket, because I like to be aggressive;
I am a strawberry, because I'm as light as a feather;
I am a violin, because my voice is very soft;
I am a Little Princess when something is bothering me.

—Deborah Moldover, Grade 3

Are You Listening Earth?

Earth, teach me unselfishness,
As the rivers are unselfish with their fish;
Earth, teach me concern,
As the foxes are concerned with winter;
Earth, teach me to be carefree,
As the ponies run wild with the wind;
Earth, teach me to try again,
Just as the flowers rise again each spring;
Earth, teach me to let go,
As the mother bird lets go of her nestling;
Earth, teach me bravery,
As a newborn kitten faces the earth;
Earth, teach me to lose my anger,
As eagles lose their feathers, sending them down to you;
Earth, teach me wisdom,
As the owl tells his wisdom to the animals.

—Joanna Sullivan, Grade 6

Maryland English Journal

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Poetry: Passion of Long-time *Maryland English Journal* Contributor Carol F. Peck

Erin E. Calvert
Frostburg State University

This brief biography of a long-time MCTELA member and teacher grew from a series of written and oral exchanges over several months. The retrospective includes elements in Peck's past and in her present service to the *Maryland English Journal*, aspects of her work as one of the original Poets-in-the-Schools, and glimpses into her own processes of teaching and writing poetry.

"It had been startling...to me to find out that...books had been written by *people*, that books were not natural wonders, coming up of themselves like grass"—Eudora Welty (6).[1]

At a certain age we, like Welty, realize that there are actual people behind books, magazines, and journals—that words found on pages were not just magically deposited there by some faceless literary sprite.

Certainly, we know that the authors are people and that these people have names—we can see them on mastheads and tables of contents. Their names, however, are too often dismissed as mere words instead of as words representing real people. This unfortunately leaves the reader with two options: either disregard the meaningless name and continue taking the person for granted, or create, more often than not, incorrect pictures of and biographical information about this person.

Because the people who write, edit, create, and sustain these publications are human beings—teachers and mentors whose influence goes far beyond letters on a page—they need to be recognized and appreciated. One of these people deserving of such attention is Carol F. Peck. After twenty-eight years, it is time Carol F. Peck became more than just a name. It is time we paid tribute to her for her on-going relationship with the *Maryland English Journal* and her impressive teaching achievements.

Carol F. Peck has been a versatile and dedicated contributor to the *Maryland English Journal* for the past twenty-eight years. She served on the *MEJ* Editorial Board from 1968 to 1984, published

Erin E. Calvert, an English major minoring in writing, graduates in May from Frostburg State University. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and MCTELA and currently serves as MCTELA historian and as the *Maryland English Journal* editorial intern.

twelve articles and poems in the *MEJ*, and has recently accepted the position of co-editor of the *MEJ* Showcase for Young Writers.

Peck was invited to join the *MEJ* Editorial Board by her mentor, Dr. Harold Herman. "I have a lot of wonderful memories of many of the Board members," recalls Peck—"Jean Sisk, Angela Broening, Edythe Samson, Charlie Allen, Len Woolf, Elsa Graser, Kay Greaney, Kay Kibler, Katie Klier, Ellen Oberfelder, and of course Harold Herman," the man who guided her through her graduate program and encouraged her to publish poems and articles in the *MEJ*.

Peck remembers the Board meeting twice a year to review submissions and "parcel out the accepted manuscripts for editing." After several hours of hard work and lively discussion, members enjoyed dinner prepared by the host/hostess. She adds that, for the sake of fairness, this job was rotated from meeting to meeting.

While on the Board, Peck saw the *MEJ* grow and was able to trace a brief history of the various publication sites and affiliated universities. When she joined, the *MEJ* was published at the University of Maryland College Park. Then, when Fil Dowling became editor, he worked out of Towson State University while the actual publication site moved to Salisbury State University, where the managing and design editors were based. In 1986 all editorial offices were located at Towson State University, and the *MEJ* was published on site. Next the *MEJ* was published at University of Maryland Baltimore County with one editor, Judy Fowler, based on site and another, Stefan Martin, based at University of Maryland College Park. Of course the *MEJ* is now published at Frostburg State University by Judith Pula.

It is fitting that Peck's current position in the *MEJ* centers on children—her favorite pupils. Peck began teaching children in 1971 when she was asked to help start a Maryland State Arts Council Program called Poets-in-the-Schools, through which she and others visited local Maryland schools to conduct intensive poetry workshops. Twenty-five years later, she is the only one of the original members still involved with the program. Peck says, "My Poets-in-the-Schools workshops continue to excite and fulfill me."

"Perhaps my best job involving children was as Writer-in-Residence at the Sidwell Friends Lower School in Bethesda, Maryland," thinks Peck. For thirteen years she spent one day a week with the children in this school. She enjoyed this position because she was able to work with the children all year, rather than just during one workshop, and she was able to see their progress from year to year.

Because the Lower School consists of grades pre-kindergarten to four, Peck was able to monitor the progress of many children for six years.

Peck believes that children are natural poets: "Children talk about *making* poems instead of writing them, which I think is wonderful because artists are makers."[2] In teaching children poetry, Peck tries to show them how to use their "new eyes." Peck explains, "New visions and sensory imagery bring all writing alive. So, when I visit a school or hold a workshop, we first learn to see familiar colors with new eyes. We talk about how red sounds or tastes or feels. What it really amounts to is seeing the world in a new way using simile and metaphor."[2] When children use these devices and their imaginations, they can create such comparisons as "a Frito is like edible permed hair" or "a marshmallow is an ant's trampoline."[3] Peck says that it is not really important that children remember terms like theme, simile, personification, and metaphor. What is important is that they "remember the experience and fall in love with language. They catch the charge, and that is what stays with them."[3]

Peck cautions that even if a child's poetry describes blowing up a math teacher or playing for their favorite football team, it is not to be suppressed: "You can't censor children's poetry. If you insist on poetry about daffodils and butterflies, you get limp stuff. If you start censoring them, where do you stop? Poetry deals with raw emotions."[3]

Because raw emotions are involved, Peck's young students sometimes use poetry as a means to work through feelings and communicate. "Poetry is the art of making feelings come alive on paper," Peck explains. She continues, "When there is something troubling most people, they can talk it out and see things in a new way. But other people can't do that—they can't deal with things going on inside them. But when you put your feelings down on paper, somehow it is not as frightening anymore."[2] A little girl in one of Peck's workshops used poetry to deal with her parents' divorce: writing poetry "feels like a sense of comfort, sort of," the young girl says. "When my dad used to leave a lot, I'd write poetry and find out why I was feeling bad. Sometimes I write poetry to my dad."[3] Peck admits, "It is a special thrill to be able to help someone connect with their inner life and reveal a hidden emotion."

Peck is also involved with alternative programs, helping at-risk teens deal with their emotions. She began holding workshops for

the Montgomery County Department of Alternative Programs in 1985 and continues today. Peck tells why these student workshops, held at various schools and detention centers, are so rewarding: "These students often have very low self-esteem. They usually write terrific poems, however, and not only feel good about themselves but also realize that there are satisfying, non-violent ways to express strong emotion." Though Peck enjoys her work, it is demanding: "I like the challenge of tough guys who really aren't tough at all inside."[2] "They feel very deeply, but they are afraid to attempt poetry. They get uptight in a new situation because they are afraid they won't live up to expectations."

Peck has been involved in teaching not only children and teens but also adults. For twenty-five years she taught an adult creative writing course at the University of Maryland. In 1993 she was recognized for this achievement when she received the Excellence in Teaching Award. This award means a lot to Peck because she "learned a great deal from motivated adults, and the award came from the students rather than the administration."

At the same time Peck was teaching at schools, detention centers, and the university, she was also volunteering at the Bethesda Retirement and Nursing Home. The thirteen years she spent there inspired her to work with hospice patients, both adults and children. Peck's previous experience with children at the Children's Hospital National Medical Center in 1980 also prompted her to work with hospice patients. She was extremely moved by her experience with the terminally ill children at Children's Hospital: "In a hospice, you are working with people who do not have much time left, and working with the children seemed to add a new dimension to them. They loved using their imaginations and becoming the wind or the moon or a magical creature. They were interested in writing and having fun with language. It's an amazing feeling to be able to help children to do that, celebrate their remaining time."[2] As a result of Peck's work, both the children and their parents benefited because "after the children are gone, their parents just treasure all their child has written."

Peck currently volunteers through Hospice Caring, Inc., in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Through this non-medical hospice organization, she helps terminally ill people in any way they need. However, she specializes in helping those who wish to leave behind written memoirs or poetry. "Hospice patients have memoirs and stories they want to preserve for family members, yet quite often they are too weak or too ill or they just do not know where to

begin," she explains. She wishes to facilitate that, even if just to hold a tape recorder and then type up everything for them later. Peck speaks fondly of three patients she was able to help: a young woman with Lou Gehrig's disease (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) whose poetry Peck helped to publish dating from her diagnosis; a young Iranian woman with multiple sclerosis who, with Peck's help, had her poetry published in a national magazine; and an eighty-one-year-old man whom Peck helped with his World War II and other memoirs. Because Peck believes so strongly in this work, in 1989 she published a guide to forming and sustaining groups, titled *From Deep Within: Poetry Workshops in Nursing Homes.*

In addition to her book, Peck has also published twelve poems, fourteen articles, four songs, and two musical plays. She follows a particular writing process from which she seldom strays. She writes all prose directly on her computer because it is so much faster and easier to edit. Peck says, "Just the act of typing and seeing the words appear stimulates my flow of thought." For poetry, however, she first writes with pen on lined paper and then types it into the computer for easy revising. She shares, "Only once did I start a poem on the computer, and that was because the subject was so painful. I needed the distance provided by the machine."

Peck's interest in writing is based on a type of challenge. She explains, "I have always been fascinated by the challenge of overcoming the boundaries or limits of language to create an experience for the reader—something larger than writer and reader both—something that may live beyond them both. I call it a triumph of art over life." She continues, "I have always loved words for their own sake—their sounds, their shapes, their feel in the mouth—and have always played with them. I also have always loved to see the familiar in new ways—which is of course at the heart of metaphor."

It is easy to understand why Peck does not have a lot of free time. However, when she is not working or playing with her two grandchildren, she is meeting with her writing club. She meets monthly with four other poets (all but Peck are retired English teachers) to critique each other's work, offer suggestions for revision, and encourage publication. The group is called "The Inevitables" because the members' paths kept crossing, and Peck said that "it was only a matter of time before we formed a group."

Carol Peck's teaching has spanned two decades and reached every age group from small children, to at-risk teenagers, to col-

lege students, to elderly nursing home residents. Through all of her teaching experiences and challenges, she optimistically maintains that anyone can teach poetry. Her reasoning behind this is that "poetry is for everybody." Peck explains, "Too many people have the misconception that you have to be specially trained or an 'educated' person or you have to be a born poet, but that is just not true. I believe there is a poet inside each of us."

Author's Note

All quotations are taken from the sources below or from conversations with Peck except for the Eudora Welty reference. Since all quotes are from Peck herself, parenthetical references were dropped for readability.

[1] Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings* (Cambridge, MA: Warner, 1983) 6.

[2] Cheryl Clemmens, "Peck Taps the 'Poet Inside of Everyone,'" *The Free Press* 6 June 1991.

[3] Julia Robb, "Kids' Poetry: Color That Can Move," *The News* (Frederick, Maryland) 4 April 1992: B3

The fall conference keynote speaker, Dr. Rose Reissman, is an experienced New York City teacher. She is the creator and developer of *Take Yourself for Grant-ed* workshops for teachers. She is the author of numerous successful grant proposals including: 20 Department of Education Title VII Projects, a Javits Project, Geraldine Chase Neighborhood, National Council of Teachers of English, Bill of Rights Education Consortium, and Council of Basic Education Grants. Dr. Reissman is a funding consultant to the Oklahoma Bar Association, the Temple Leap Project, and the National Council of Teachers of English. She specializes in Federal RFPs and provides ongoing technical assistance in the preparation and editing of proposals. She will be discussing grant writing for the classroom.

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